

**The End IS Coming
Lessons for the Last Days Church in the West
Amos 5:16 – 27**

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As we look at our culture today, many times we wonder, how can something that is so clearly stated in God's Word be so completely missed. With all the very clear language stating that there is only one way to be saved, why do we see people lie to themselves about "many paths" to the Lord. Satan. We simply repeat his lie.

John 14:6

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (ESV)

Jesus is the only way to heaven. But what is it that moves believers towards apostasy? There is a pattern to apostasy. Amos tells us.

Here in the west, you have those who are nominal Christians. I say here in the west because when the church is under persecution, nominal Christians are hard to find. You either are or are not. But back to the problem caused by tolerance, control and wealth here in the west today.

A nominal Christian may or may not be born again. If they are, they are carnal heretical Christians if they are not believers, then apostate.

The heretic differs from the apostate in that he only denies one or more of the doctrines of revealed religion, whereas the apostate denies the religion itself. (Hove 1907-1913)

They identify as Christians. These are people who say they live for the Lord, but they don't because in most cases they aren't, not really. They are lying to themselves.

On Apostasy – Dr. Ryrie

Can an apostate have been a Christian believer? or, to put it another way, Can a Christian apostatize? In the parable of Luke 8 it seems clear that those on the rock who receive the Word with joy but who have no root and who in time of temptation fall away (apostatize) are not genuine believers, since the test for true faith is the production of fruit which was lacking in their cases. They did believe (v. 13) but this was not a fruit-bearing faith and therefore not a saving faith. In the second instance, the false teachers of 1 Timothy 4:1 are said to “depart from the faith.” Whether they ever possessed (in contrast to professed) the faith is not specifically revealed in that passage. However, the false teachers described by Jude (who were likely the first to fulfill the prophecy of Paul in 1 Timothy 4) are adjudged by Jude to be unsaved. He discerns them to be without the Holy Spirit (v. 19), and “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His” (Rom 8:9b). Those who are addressed in Hebrews 3:12 are not yet themselves apostates but are professing church members who are being warned against apostasy which stems from an evil heart of unbelief. The writer obviously believes that apostasy was a very real danger for some of these readers. This is most naturally understood in the light of the Lord’s parable of the sower of Luke 8:4–15. In other words, there is always the possibility of a professing Christian renouncing that which he professed. He receives the Word but since it does not bear fruit in his life his experience proves to be merely self-regeneration rather than Spirit regeneration (cf. Jas 2:26)...Thus, apostasy is a departure from truth previously accepted and it involves the breaking of a professed relationship with God. (Ryrie 2010, 58)

The operative word, professed. No depth, no faith, no relationship.

As we have learned, most of Israel was in the same place. They say they are Jews and are God's people, but the reality is they are that in name only. They say they live for YAHWEH, they go to the worship centers, but they do not go to the one prescribed place for them in the Torah, the Temple. They do rituals, but there is no relationship.

The amazing thing we have seen so far in Amos, the steps of spiritual decline are the same then and now.

We are going to start off by talking about Ben Bornagain IV. He is a fourth generation Christian born in a Christian nation and is a member of a church that teaches how you can have your best life today. He goes to a Laodicean church.

Ben has been going to this church for a long time. He has even been an elder in the church. But at work, he cuts a few corners now and then. His firm has a stellar reputation for integrity, barely.

Ben goes to church to “show the flag.” All good Americans go to church, somewhere. But he is not there every week.

But he never misses a football game for his alma mater or his favorite pro team. He is a regular at tailgating.

Fishing and hunting, he is there no matter what.

If it is raining on Sunday though, church online should work, right? Is Ben carnal or apostate? God's grace can save anyone.

His path is not a new one. It is one that Amos has been discussing. It is a pattern used by the enemy over and over again to make the strong weak and to lead those who know the Lord, astray and become ineffectual.

Ben Bornagain IV Steps to Apostasy

Phase 1 – “I’m a Christian. Yeah, I don’t go to worship that much but inside, I’m really a good person.” Initially they live for God, but quickly move to living for self. (Matthew 13:5&6)

Phase 2 – God grades on the curve of relative goodness versus relative badness. Now they are fully embracing living for self. (2 Peter 2:17 – 22)

Phase 3 – “God will wink at my little indiscretions now and then.” Now excuses are being made in order to put off the need to repent. I’m essentially a good person and will make amends for this later when I do get to worship. (Luke 12:20) (Carnal?)

Phase 4 – a full embracing of the culture and all the “good” things it has to offer. Loss of a Biblical worldview and an embracing of living for self. Right is what I say it is, in other words, situationally ethics is fully operative and there is a loss of the sense of right and wrong. My truth is my truth and yours is yours. (Amos 2:3 – 8) (Apostate?)

Phase 5 – Why is this happening to me, I didn’t do anything to deserve this? I’m a good person. (Amos 2:12 – 13)

Phase 6 – What happened is bad, but God is with us in what we do, and He will come and judge those who don’t agree with me and those who judge me. I’m good. I live in (nation of choice) and God would never abandon us. (Amos 5:16 – 17)

Yes, He would. We see signs all around us that we are in the end of the age. The Holy Spirit is doing all He can to point us to Jesus but not many are hearing these days. Falling away has become popular but we should not be surprised.

We will discover that what happens in Israel is a type of what is happening today to the church. “The first event that must come before the final Day of the Lord is the apostasy, or the rebellion. Paul is saying that the final Day of the Lord cannot come until there is a widespread departure from the true faith. Some take the departure here to be a physical departure, or the Rapture of the church to heaven. While that view has some merit, most expositors believe that this refers to a theological departure or rebellion.” (Hitchcock and Kinley 2017, Kindle Location 417)

Did you pick up on the cycle. A nominal believer who drifts away from the Lord, engages in actions to show the world they never were believers to begin with. They are fully supportive of the culture and all it has to offer. They indulge in the what the culture has to offer and encourage others who are true believers to indulge with them, but when bad stuff begins to happen, because God is trying to get their attention, becomes patriotically religious, but with no relationship. And soon they drift away only to return the next time something bad happens.

Amos has been addressing this problem in Israel. They believed that God blessed those who were rich, but they had become rich on the backs of their brother and sisters. “They knew from their law and the traditions of Israel that what they were doing was wrong. That is one reason why they became so religious; religion was a cloak for their sin. But after they had practiced their injustices for a long enough period, they eventually lost sight of the fact that what they were doing was wrong. They considered it right and began to look forward to the day when their “hard but necessary” decisions and “right but misunderstood” conduct would be vindicated.” (Boice 2002, 196-197)

Matthew 7:21–23

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” (ESV)

At the beginning of chapter 5, Amos began with a lament, mourning over what was to come. Amos stated exactly what was coming, and yet he held out the grace of God to the people of Israel. They would have to repent. But Amos realizes that is not going to happen. The response he is receiving there in Bethel is apparently, not encouraging.

Ever tell your child that if you do this, here are the consequences, knowing full well that they will do what you told them not to? I know growing up, I was warned, told the consequences, yet went ahead anyhow thinking I could get away with it. I never did.

After all that he has said, and seeing the eyes roll with “pleeeeeeze.” Amos is so sure that “Israel will ignore the admonitions that he proceeds immediately with the announcement. Furthermore, the rejection of the admonitions becomes part of the indictment and thus paves the way for judgment.” (Hubbard 1989)

In other words, YAHWEH knows everything, He knows they will not repent, tell them about their prize.

Amos 5:16–17

“Therefore this is what the LORD God of armies, the Lord says: “There is mourning in all the public squares, And in all the streets they say, ‘Oh no! Oh no!’ They also call the farmer to mourning And professional mourners to mourning rites. And in all the vineyards there is mourning, Because I will pass through the midst of you,” says the LORD.” (NASB 2020)

God’s grace has been extended and rejected by most in Israel. They believe they aren’t that bad. “Look at how well off we are materially and financially. We are a superpower. No one will touch because God has blessed us.”

Because of this attitude, there is no delay in the announcement. The happy thought being given to the people of Israel by YAHWEH is this, “mourning and lamentation for the dead will fill both city and land. On every hand will there be dead to weep for, because Jehovah will go judging through the land. The roads and streets are not merely those of the capital, although these are primarily to be thought of, but those of all the towns in the kingdom.” (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 192)

The Hebrew word translated “mourning” is the word מִסְפָּד (mispēd). The word means “wailing; for dead...for calamity experienced.” (Brown, Driver and Briggs 1977, 704) This is the wailing you would hear from loved ones at the grave. This is the death wail.

This death wail is not just in town, but throughout the entirety of Israel. Even in those places normally associated with joy, the vineyard, they will see death.

These words reveal that Yahweh is somehow engaged directly in the judgment, even if the instrument will be an unnamed foreign army (3:11; 6:14). (Carroll R. 2020, 330)

The people of Israel, deeply embedded in false religion, thinking that everything is okay, even though a list has been provided showing the efforts taken to bring them into their right mind, are still deluded.

Amos 5:18–20

“Woe to you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light; As when a man flees from a lion And a bear confronts him, Or he goes home, leans with his hand against the wall, And a snake bites him. Will the day of the LORD not be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?” (NASB 2020)

Once again up pops the Day of the Lord. Recall that Obadiah first used the term, but it was Joel who made sure we understood what it was.

These are religious people, not necessarily saved people. As we learned from Hosea, they were deeply involved in fertility god worship which had been integrated into the worship of YAHWEH at their various worship centers throughout the northern kingdom. None of the worship was per the Torah. None of it involved any Levitical priests. It was all politically correct religion where the people approached God on their terms and because they were doing this, they truly believed that they were blessed and His people. Just like our culture today.

One hallmark of contemporary Christianity is heresy, for that is essentially what the prevailing worldview in America—Syncretism—represents. The blending of elements from numerous, unbiblical worldviews along with a few biblical views is now embraced as the popular, accepted expression of Christian faith. (Barna, Release #3: A Detailed Look at How the Worldview of Parents of Preteens Misses the Mark 2022)

The exact problem Amos condemns in Israel, is our problem today.

Almost nine out of 10 U.S. adults (88%) have an impure, unrecognizable worldview that is nothing more than a customized, personal blend of disparate ideas adopted from multiple philosophies of life. This worldview is called Syncretism. (Barna, American Worldview Inventory 2021-22: The Annual Report on the State of Worldview in the United States 2022, 18)

Elsewhere in the research is found the direct link to the Israel of the time of Amos. The slippery slope identified by Amos is the same one our culture is on.

Americans are neither deep nor sophisticated thinkers. We have largely abandoned logic and analytic thinking in favor of emotional satisfaction. To promote a way of life that challenges us to embrace biblical principles will take time and effort. Most people are more interested in a life of comfort and convenience than one of wisdom and righteousness. People who are willing to fight for a more biblical way of thinking and acting can make a difference, but they must be prepared to commit to the process for the long haul. A worldview is neither developed nor re-engineered overnight. (Barna, American Worldview Inventory 2021-22: The Annual Report on the State of Worldview in the United States 2022, 23-24)

They were going through the Mosaic rituals, but they were also worshiping idols. It was just religion to them, just as churchgoing is to many people today. There is nothing vital, nothing real in going through a ritual. The reason many church services are so dead is that they are nothing more than ritual. It may be beautiful, it may appeal to your eyes and your ears, but does it change your life? Is it transforming? Is it something you can live by in the marketplace?

There are many people today who are premillennial and pretribulational in their theology and who very piously say, "Oh, if only the Lord would come!" If you are one of them, let me ask you this: Do you really want Him to come? Or are you using the Rapture of the church as a sort of an escape mechanism to get you out of your troubles down here? (McGee 1997, 707)

There is still time, just as with Israel, there was still time. The key concept though is repentance.

We are talking about those who identify as belonging to Christ. The Church.

Our Lord knew exactly what the conditions in the last days would be like and where His church would be wandering off to. This isn't new, Israel and Judah went to the same place.

He wrote a letter to a church that John delivered dealing with this problem and providing the solution.

Revelation 3:15–21

“I know what you have done; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. How I wish you were either one or the other! But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I am going to spit you out of my mouth! You say, ‘I am rich and well off; I have all I need.’ But you do not know how miserable and pitiful you are! You are poor, naked, and blind. I advise you, then, to buy gold from me, pure gold, in order to be rich. Buy also white clothing to dress yourself and cover up your shameful nakedness. Buy also some ointment to put on your eyes, so that you may see. I rebuke and punish all whom I love. Be in earnest, then, and turn from your sins. Listen! I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they will eat with me. To those who win the victory I will give the right to sit beside me on my throne, just as I have been victorious and now sit by my Father on his throne.” (GNB)

Happy sinners are always practical atheists. Whatever they say about God, they live their lives as if he were not there and had not the slightest interest in taking his own Word seriously! As long as they are not being actually struck down by thunderbolts, they feel God must be reasonably pleased with them. Besides, even disasters can be blamed on other people’s wickedness. (Keddie 1986, 88)

Israel thought that they had it altogether. They were religious and they were looking for the day of the Lord, but they did not have it altogether and the day of the Lord was going to be something they did not grasp it to be.

For the last days church, that same assurance exists. “Assurance that they had it all together had resulted in a lukewarmness that made Christ want to spit them out of his mouth. They were counseled to buy from him spiritual wealth, the white robes of righteousness and clear vision into spiritual matters.

He stands at the heart’s door of each believer and knocks, requesting permission to enter and share the blessings and joy of personal fellowship. Christ promises to each overcomer the privilege of sitting with him on his throne. (Mounce 1997, 106)

I have talked with many believers who are looking forward to the rapture of the church. The sentiment is similar, “it’s getting bad, we need to be out of here.”

I ask follow-up questions, usually along the line of “what are you doing to hasten the day of the Lord?” (2 Peter 3:11 – 13)

Sometimes I get the right answer (2 Peter 3:14 – 15), other times, I get the look. You know, the “what do you mean” look. Those are the ones to follow up on. Peter has this warning.

2 Peter 3:17–18

“Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard that you do not get led astray by the error of these unprincipled men and fall from your firm grasp on the truth. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the honor both now and on that eternal day.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Amos addresses those who have bad theology. They are looking for the Day of the Lord but have mistaken the intent considering their current predicament.

Amos 5:18

“Woe to you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light;” (NASB 2020)

The people of Israel had embraced bad theology. They believed that since they were Jews, God would, and do so on their behalf, finish off the enemy. At one level, that is indeed true, on another level, not so much. There was the issue of obedience.

The day of Yahweh is connected to a divine theophany, a powerful personal appearance of the God of Israel. It seems that in Amos's time, the popular understanding of such an event was that Yahweh would come to defeat the nation's enemies. Israel was reveling in victories, which would have reinforced that nationalistic sentiment (6:13; cf. 9:10). Recent defeats that contradicted this belief were apparently ignored or minimized (1:3–15; 4:10). The prophet directly confronts this national ideology of a victorious Day of Yahweh. (Carroll R. 2020, 335)

Where did this come from? It appears they are applying the prophecy of Joel 3 to their current situation. But they have conveniently forgotten the message of the previous verse.

Joel 2:32

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.” (ESV)

They have completely missed the point of the prophecy of Joel. Just because your heritage is Jewish does not mean you are in, “those only would be saved on the day of Jehovah who called upon the name of the Lord, and were called by the Lord, i.e., were acknowledged by the Lord as His own. These infatuated hopes, which confirmed the nation in the security of its life of sin, are met by Amos with an exclamation of woe upon those who long for the day of Jehovah to come, and with the declaration explanatory of the woe, that that day is darkness and not light, and will bring them nothing but harm and destruction, and not prosperity and salvation.” (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 192-193)

For those of us looking forward to the soon return of Christ for His church, here are a few of the things we need to remember.

- We need to continue to work until He comes back (Luke 19:13).
- Our job is making disciples (Matthew 28:19) .
- Be faithful no matter what (Luke 16:10, Philippians 2:14 – 16, Revelation 3:10 – 11).
- Live like we are kids of the King (Philippians 1:27 – 30).

Remember, as believers, the way we live today will impact our eternity.

2 Corinthians 5:9–10

“So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.” (NLT)

All of us, who follow Christ, will be privileged to meet personally with Jesus and receive a job evaluation. We are saved, what have we done with it? Jesus is going to ask that question of us.

1 Corinthians 3:10–15

“Because of God's grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ. Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.” (NLT)

This is the reason I often make the statement that, although many people are saved, they are going to smell like they were bought at a fire sale when they get to heaven. Everything they did here on earth they did in the flesh, they did it for some earthly reason, for some present satisfaction. (McGee 1997, 707)

Again, Amos is putting it on the line for those who attest they are followers of YAHWEH, but aren't.

He says, "Cut out this nonsense that you desire the Day of the Lord. It is not a day of light but of darkness. There will be a Great Tribulation that you will go through." (McGee 1997, 708)

This is the lesson for Israel, yes it will be a time of blessing, but there will be a time of discipline first. God will judge His people Israel before He blesses them. Again, the reference we see in scripture about a remnant. They were doing ritual, that made them feel really good. But Amos is saying it will be darkness, not light.

Amos 5:19–20

"As when a man flees from a lion And a bear confronts him, Or he goes home, leans with his hand against the wall, And a snake bites him. Will the day of the LORD not be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?" (NASB 2020)

For Israel, the coming Day of the Lord will be one of inescapable tragedy. The picture being drawn shows someone escaping one enemy, only to be taken down by another, and then another.

- Lion = flee and escape
- Bear = head home
- Home = snake bite

Here is the thing, this is more than just an example. Amos is also telling the nation something about their future here as well.

Daniel 7:3–5

"And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it. "And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'" (NKJV)

Daniel say the lion is Babylon, Jeremiah stated the same and also referred to Assyria in much the same way.

Jeremiah 50:17

"Israel is like scattered sheep; The lions have driven him away. First the king of Assyria devoured him; Now at last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has broken his bones." (NKJV)

Bear, Daniel referenced that as well, the Persian Empire.

Serpent, Daniel said nothing about a serpent or a connection to one as a world empire. But John did.

Revelation 12:7–9

"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (NKJV)

The serpent is who the nation will confront during the Day of the Lord. Prior to him being kicked out of heaven, Israel thinks they are safe. They are home, they think they are safe, they have a 7-year peace deal. But look out.

Revelation 12:18–13:5

"And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, and on its horns were ten diadem crowns, and on its heads a blasphemous

name. Now the beast that I saw was like a leopard, but its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. The dragon gave the beast his power, his throne, and great authority to rule. One of the beast's heads appeared to have been killed, but the lethal wound had been healed. And the whole world followed the beast in amazement; they worshiped the dragon because he had given ruling authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast too, saying: "Who is like the beast?" and "Who is able to make war against him?" The beast was given a mouth speaking proud words and blasphemies, and he was permitted to exercise ruling authority for forty-two months." (NET 2nd ed.)

The Beast is empowered by the serpent and has characteristics of the lion and the bear.

Amos 5:19–20

"As when a man flees from a lion And a bear confronts him, Or he goes home, leans with his hand against the wall, And a snake bites him. Will the day of the LORD not be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?" (NASB 2020)

In other words, be careful what you wish for. Amos "knows Yahweh himself, and he knows the decision of Yahweh. From the perspective of that absolute certainty he can see what Yahweh's Day means for his contemporaries, and the expectation of that Day becomes a dominant feature of his announcement of judgment." (Mays 1969, 105)

What does YAHWEH think of the syncretic style of worship that has been developed in Israel over the past 200 years? Remember, Jeroboam I started this and with each king since then, none have really done much to return the worship back to where it belongs, to YAHWEH and at the Temple.

They may be keeping some of the feasts, but they have added some in and King Ahab mixed in elements of Baal worship to include male and female prostitution. We now get God's opinion.

Amos 5:21–24

"I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your festive assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fattened oxen. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll out like waters, And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." (NASB 2020)

YAHWEH had specified in the Torah how He was to be approached and worshipped. None of that was being followed by the majority of Israel.

But they think they have it all together spiritually because now, they are materially rich, powerful militarily and an obvious economic powerhouse in the region. All of this is about to end.

It would be like going into a church today where everyone says they know Jesus Christ, the service was okay, not a lot of Bible. There was more discussion about crafting your own truth than finding out about the truth of the scriptures.

We take truth, doctrine, and moral decisions into our own hands and fall for the deception our first parents embraced in the Garden. Questioning the clearly revealed will and Word of God, Adam and Eve believed that personal fulfillment and happiness lay somewhere outside their loving Father's provision (Genesis 3:4 – 5). (Hitchcock and Kinley 2017, Kindle Location 534)

We are more like Adam and Eve than we care to think about.

For Israel, "as Amos looked at them, however, he saw a people who not only professed salvation but who exhibited a total lack of the sort of evidence which would make their profession credible. Theirs was a groundless confidence which would not bear the weight of the divine majesty in the day of the Lord's coming." (Motyer 1984, 129)

Starting with the split 200 years prior, Israel had been following YAHWEH their way, not His. This was a people who were positive they were saved, but they were not. The evidence was lacking. The rich were abusing the poor. The courts were corrupt. As part of their worship, the nation had become worse than the Amorites who were defeated by the Lord due to their sin. They were apostate.

Based on what Amos has already prophesied, only 10% of those he is talking to (Amos 5:3) would remain after the coming events take place. Most of the nation will be dead or in exile. Only a remnant will remain.

Yes, judgement is coming, but God's grace has been offered to those who seek Him. Just don't seek Him the way you have been doing in the past. God will detail the reasons and it centers around religious hypocrisy. Jesus also had nothing good to say about the religious hypocrites of His day. That theme has not changed.

Amos 5:21

"I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your festive assemblies." (NASB 2020)

Everything they are doing to approach God on their terms, God hates. They make a play at following the feasts as defined in the Torah, but remember, there are no officially sanctioned places of worship anywhere in Israel, only in Judah. You don't celebrate Yom Kippur in front of a golden calf.

Amos 5:22–24

"Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fattened oxen. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll out like waters, And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." (NASB 2020)

None of the sacrifices they are offering up will be accepted by YAHWEH. Why?

- 1.) Their heart is in the wrong place.
- 2.) They are oppressing their brothers and sisters.
- 3.) Wrong place and format.

The most important element, their hearts, that was the real problem. Ritual will not work, but it will make you feel better. The problem though is the underlying problem of sin has still not been resolved. They prefer to approach God on their terms because in that forum, He winks at their sin.

Much like avoiding churches that actually teach the word of God in favor of those who are into psychobabble. As we have already discussed, finding a church where the pastor adheres to a Biblical worldview is becoming daunting.

A key difference between progressive and conservative Christians may be the priorities emphasized in their faith traditions. Conservative Christians emphasize theological compatibility while progressive Christians focus on adherence to a political viewpoint that conforms to larger societal concerns. (Yancey and Quosigk 2021, 52)

Just as Israel in the time of Amos had moved to an embrace of a more affirming god, we have moved to the same place in our culture.

The rejection of YAHWEH of the forms and styles that Israel was following in their misguided attempts to approach Him on their terms is total and complete. He has rejected:

- Festivals
- Feasts
- All offerings
- Fellowship with unbelievers

- Their attempts at praise and worship
- All their attempts at worship

What YAHWEH wants, justice and righteousness. Two things not seen in the majority of those living in Israel at the time. “What God truly desires is justice and righteousness. The verse is a dramatic divine call to moral commitment rather than pious ritual.” (Birch 1997, 221)

This should be a characteristic of life in Israel, not a one-time event. Verse 24 clearly characterizes this to be like an ever-flowing stream, a lifestyle. One that comes from a right heart.

Amos 5:25–27

“Did you present Me with sacrifices and grain offerings in the wilderness for forty years, house of Israel? You also carried along Sikkuth your king and Kiyyun, your images, the star of your gods which you made for yourselves. Therefore I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus,” says the LORD, whose name is the God of armies.” (NASB 2020)

YAHWEH points out that while they were in the wilderness, they did not present sacrifices and grain offerings. They were being cared for by Him. There was no fixed ritual or place of worship. They had a movable Tabernacle.

The nation lived in the grace of God. He care for them. The recollection of the “wilderness” as such probably evoked the thought that material for vegetable offerings (flour, oil, incense), to say nothing of animal sacrifices, was simply not available there. (Wolff 1977, 265)

But something else was there, the same problem that Amos has pointedly stated is their current problem, idolatry.

Amos 5:26

“You also carried along Sikkuth your king and Kiyyun, your images, the star of your gods which you made for yourselves.” (NASB 2020)

These are both names for Saturn. They were carrying with them, in the wilderness, images of astrology, or astral gods. “Sikkuth or dSAG.KUD is associated with Ninurta in Ugaritic sources and specifically with the planet Saturn.” (Matthews, Chavalas and Walton 2000, Amos 5:26)

The Mesopotamian star god, Saturn, occurs as kajamanu in Akkadian texts and has the meaning “the steady one,” an apt title for the slow-moving orbit of the planet Saturn. The images of these astral deities were carried in procession on their festival days. Since both of the gods mentioned in this verse are associated with the planet Saturn, the phrase “star of your god” is actually a reference to the people’s worship of astral deities. Sacred processions paraded the images and symbols of these gods through the city streets to their shrines, where sacrifices, sacred dancing and other cultic activities would take place. Amos, however, is satirizing these practices. Instead of simply describing what has been occurring, he now predicts a “final” procession, but this time the people carry these idols with them into exile (compare the carrying of burdensome idols in Is 46:1). (Matthews, Chavalas and Walton 2000, Amos 5:26)

Amos 5:27

“Therefore I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus,” says the LORD, whose name is the God of armies.” (NASB 2020)

Israel is to be disciplined by the Lord. Here He tells them what the results of their idol worship will be, exile. They will go into captivity beyond Damascus, the Assyrian empire’s capital is in Nineveh, and some would go even further than that. This is where their unbelief resulting into a rejection of YAHWEH, becoming apostate or fallen away from Him, has taken them.

They were led captive by Satan into idolatry, and therefore God caused them to go into captivity among idolaters, and hurried them into a strange land, since they were so fond of strange gods. (Hentry 1994, 1512)

What is being prophesied as about to take place was not a mystery, it was a promise.

Deuteronomy 28:63–66

“And just as the LORD took delight in making you prosperous and numerous, so the LORD will take delight in bringing you to ruin and destruction; you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to possess. The LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other; and there you shall serve other gods, of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known. Among those nations you shall find no ease, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and a languishing spirit. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; night and day you shall be in dread, with no assurance of your life.” (NRSV)

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