

**I See a Bad Moon Rising
And Yes, Without Repentance, Trouble IS on the Way
Paint It Black
Amos 5:1 – 15**

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Welcome to the book of woes. We begin a lament for Israel “who has fallen in battle with horrific losses (cf. 4:10). What is worse, not only can Israel not get up, there is no one to lift it up ... not even Yahweh.” (Carroll R. 2003, 693)

A lament is a funeral dirge. We recently experienced this with the death and mourning connected with HM Queen Elizabeth II. The music played was not exactly happy sounding was it.

YAHWEH has been speaking directly to His people via Amos. In chapter 3, Israel and Judah were commanded to hear about the potential threat of destruction unless they would repent.

In chapter 4 the command to hear was directed to the housewives of the elite reflecting how pervasive the sins of the nation had become. YAHWEH outlined all that He had done to get their attention, but the nation has ignored the warnings and continued in their sin. YAHWEH concluded the second message by telling them to prepare to meet God, and unless repentance took place, this was to be in the form of judgement.

The warnings of impending doom and the lessons from history are now over. Based on their actions of ignoring the warnings from the prophets and defecting to the other side; what we see here with the third message is simple, YAHWEH moves to lament. This is not a good sign for the people of Israel.

Those judgements that were warnings, the military actions (Amos 3:11), the end of idolatry (Amos 3:14), the exile (Amos 3:12, 4:2-3), the humbling warned about (Amos 3:15,4:2-3), will all take place. Amos moves forward and hints at things to come.

A face-to-face meeting is in the works and based on what we were reading in Amos 4:12 – 13, it appears to be ominous.

Amos 4:12–13

““Therefore so I will do to you, Israel; Because I will do this to you, **Prepare to meet your God, Israel.**” For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind, And declares to a person what are His thoughts, He who makes dawn into darkness And treads on the high places of the earth, The LORD God of armies is His name.” (NASB 2020)

This meeting will be in judgment.

In the midst of prosperity, power and riches comes the message, your number is up unless you change the way you are living. This is a message for our culture in the west today as well. Our culture has opted for the good life, like Israel. Some have fully embraced Molech worship, under the guise of choice or reproductive rights. Other have turned whole hog to Baal under the banner of pride, freedom and “love is love.” Governmental mandates that seem to come one after another in some locations, and now are beginning vaguely to resemble the oppression seen in Israel just prior to their exile.

Religious persecution, call it Christianophobia, is present in our culture but is not as pervasive as previously thought since most churches have turned to syncretism, like Israel did, and no longer worship the Lord but are into heresy. No need to persecute those who have gone to the other side.

Our culture looks and feels just like the one Amos has gone to warn. Everything looks great, but Amos is saying that it really isn't. This is no different than us remaining faithful to the Lord today and even though everyone says everything is just great, we know better because of what the Lord says in His word. The end really is coming soon.

The people of Israel “naturally interpreted objective reality in very positive images. In their pride (6:6–8) they ignored the nation’s social chaos. They had no reason to be proud; their riches were gained through shameful treatment of the poor and military victories determined by God’s grace (2 Kings 13:4–5; 14:25–27). These oppressors deceived themselves with a nationalistic ideology based on a false understanding of the source of their blessings.” (Smith 1994, 62)

Welcome to our nation in 2022.

The last sixty years have given birth to a moral disaster, and what have we done? Sadly we must say that the evangelical world has been part of the disaster. More than this, the evangelical response itself has been a disaster. Where is the clear voice speaking to the crucial issues of the day with distinctively biblical, Christian answers. With tears we must say it is not there and that a large segment of the evangelical world has become seduced by the world spirit of this present age. And more than this, we can expect the future to be a further disaster if the evangelical world does not take a stand for biblical truth and morality in the full spectrum of life. (Schaeffer 1982, 401)

Many take the view today, just as Israel did, that we are a nation that belongs uniquely to God, He has blessed, He has, and He will take care of us into the future. No, He won't if we do not repent. Amos is giving us prima facie evidence of that with Israel.

America, like every other nation on earth, is part of what the Bible calls the world as opposed to being part of the kingdom of God. Yet within every country there are followers of Jesus, whether their numbers are large or small, and it is the followers of Jesus who are part of the kingdom of God, meaning that they live under the rule and reign of God. The rest of the world is part of another kingdom. (Brown 2022, 178)

YAHWEH made that crystal clear to us in Amos 3:2.

Amos 3:2

“You only have I known among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your wrongdoing.” (NASB 2020)

Our call as a last days church is to continue with the task assigned to us in the Great Commission and continue to make disciples. “Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”” (Matthew 28:18–20, NLT)

Amos 5:1–3

“Hear this word which I am taking up for you as a song of mourning, house of Israel: She has fallen, she will not rise again— The virgin Israel. She lies unnoticed on her land; There is no one to raise her up. For this is what the Lord GOD says: “The city which goes forth a thousand strong Will have a hundred left, And the one which goes forth a hundred strong Will have ten left to the house of Israel.”” (NASB 2020)

The fall of Israel, usually announced as coming in the future, is treated as a judgment already executed; the calamity is celebrated as though it had already occurred by singing a funeral song for the nation. (Mays 1969, 84-85)

Amos is telling those gathered to listen at Bethel that he is mourning for Israel, as if everything that he has warned of leading up to this point, has already taken place. If the people do not repent, it will.

Amos addresses a group of vibrant very alive people, as if they are observing their own funeral.

Here, for Amos, this isn't a joke, these are not faithful followers looking forward to the day, these are abject idolators wallowing in their apostasy.

The picture that Amos draws in verse 2 is tragic, hugely so. He sings of a young woman, a virgin, who has been cut down in her prime prior to being able to experience being married or having children. “Israel is called a ‘virgin’, not because she is pure and unsullied, but because she has been independent as a nation up till now. In this sense she is a ‘virgin’. This will end.” (Keddie 1986, 77)

The people of Israel lost their Biblical world view and replaced it with one found in the surrounding nations.

They are very much alive and at the same time, very dead. A lot like many today who have been or are currently involved in cultural churchianity, they look very much alive. They affirm the culture and side with perceived social justice issues that the Bible simply calls sin, but these churches are dead. The Spirit is not involved in the operation. Jesus warned a couple of churches in the book of Revelation, both still around today, about this situation.

The first church Jesus talked to was dead. I went to one of those in high school and today where it used to stand is a Chick-Fil-a.

Revelation 3:1–3

“To the angel of the church in Sardis write the following: “This is the solemn pronouncement of the one who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a reputation that you are alive, but in reality you are dead. Wake up then, and strengthen what remains that was about to die, because I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Therefore, remember what you received and heard, and obey it, and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will never know at what hour I will come against you.’” (NET 2nd ed.)

Dead churches = dead religion. A Christless Christianity.

This dead religion is what has impacted the culture. Heads buried in the sand while in house arguments within the church take place over various doctrines and fine points of theology while a world is going to hell. A loss of focus of the real mission which we have already discussed...making disciples. High church music, which is great to listen to, but who is being saved? A whole generation has walked away and not to another church.

Being a biblical Christian means living in the supernatural now, not only theoretically but in practice. If a man sits in the one chair, and denies the existence of the supernatural portion of the world, we say he is an unbeliever. What shall we call ourselves when we sit in the other chair but live as though the supernatural were not there? Should not such an attitude be given the name “unfaith?” “Unfaith” is the Christian not living in the light of the supernatural now. It is then Christianity that has become simply a “good philosophy.” (Schaeffer, True Spirituality 1982, 259)

The world changed all around us at the same time. A world that was no longer friendly to the church, even the dead one. This really isn't new, per Solomon, but is simply a repeat of what has been seen before. But the overlay of the convergence of prophecy being fulfilled and warning signs given by Jesus in Matthew 24 are all new.

The other church Jesus talked and warned was the one in Laodicea. The last days church. The church that thinks they have it going on but have no idea who Jesus is.

Revelation 3:15–19

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot! So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth! Because you say, “I am rich and have acquired great wealth, and need nothing,” but do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked, take my advice and buy gold from me refined by fire so you can become rich! Buy from me white clothing so you can be clothed and your shameful nakedness will not be exposed, and buy eye salve to put on your eyes so you can see! All those I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent!” (NET 2nd ed.)

Laodicea is the church turned into a feel-good TED Talk accompanied with a full affirming embrace of the culture. Laodicean churches make you feel good about yourself. Sin is seldom discussed much less repented of. Some lifestyles the Bible says are sinful, are even affirmed all while Christ is turned into only a teacher.

Meanwhile, a small number of believers, a remnant just as in Israel, continues to remain faithful to what the Lord has called us to do. Jesus referred to this as the church in Philadelphia whereas Amos called them the remnant (Amos 3:12).

Revelation 3:8–11

“I know your deeds. (Look! I have put in front of you an open door that no one can shut.) I know that you have little strength, but you have obeyed my word and have not denied my name. Listen! I am going to make those people from the synagogue of Satan—who say they are Jews yet are not, but are lying— Look, I will make them come and bow down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

Because you have kept my admonition to endure steadfastly, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is about to come on the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one can take away your crown.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Today, we have become a multicultural society in which the cultural dominance of Christians has dramatically fallen. It is irrelevant whether we approve of this social change; it is a reality we have to deal with. Christians should not expect to regain cultural dominance in the near future, and attempts to assert their status as the majority group are likely to engender more anger than support. However, Christians do

have the right to maintain their place in the cultural discussion, a place that is currently threatened by Christianophobia. (Yancey 2015, 26)

In Israel, if you were a believer, you were in hiding. We learned that earlier in our study of Hosea. Those who were still following YAHWEH were very few, but they were still there. "Israel's prosperity, military prowess and ersatz spirituality could not save her. The statistics of defeat are as conclusive as they are grim." (Keddie 1986, 78)

Amos 5:3

"For this is what the Lord GOD says: "The city which goes forth a thousand strong Will have a hundred left, And the one which goes forth a hundred strong Will have ten left to the house of Israel."" (NASB 2020)

This feels like a "last call" to the nation. Only 10% left after invasion and exile.

Amos, do you know who you are talking to? We are God's chosen people. He placed us here and He protects us. We are obviously blessed since we have all those things, we deem to be important. He blessed us in the past and will continue to bless us on into the future.

It is indeed a "final" warning.

The invasion of the Assyrian will be costly in human life; only a tenth will be spared. This prophecy and others throughout Amos and the other prophetic books of the Old Testament show how literally God meant the warnings of Deuteronomy 28. (Feinberg 1990, 103)

We must remember that. God means what He says.

It looks dark for the nation. But Amos will show that this is still, even at this late date, a decision that can be reversed.

Amos 5:4–5

"For this is what the LORD says to the house of Israel: "Seek Me so that you may live. But do not resort to Bethel And do not come to Gilgal, Nor cross over to Beersheba; For Gilgal will certainly go into captivity And Bethel will come to nothing."" (NASB 2020)

After telling of the tragic death of Israel, YAHWEH still is holding out grace to His people, but it is short and to the point. The promise of life comes with conditions, to seek YAHWEH and not to continue indulging in those so-called centers of worship that have been relied on in the past. YAHWEH His way, not ours is the path being laid out.

For him, pilgrimage to the imperial sanctuary in Bethel, the site of the Jacob tradition, and to the venerable sanctuary of Gilgal in the Jordan depression, in which it was especially the tradition of the conquest that was preserved and kept alive (see the discussion of 4:4 above), would lead to the same destruction to which these very sanctuaries themselves would succumb (cf. 9:1ff.). (Jeremias 1998, 88)

Israel had turned these into centers of idolatry.

What does this look like today? It looks like a pilgrimage. Taking the time to go to a physical location because that is where it all began, or where the center of operations is, or, etc. etc.

I am a historian. I love going to places that I can associate with events that took place in the past, like the surrender field at Yorktown VA. Or the battlefield at Vicksburg MS. The problem comes when going to places like that becomes a religious event. Like going to the Vatican, or the Temple Mount, or one of the three potential sites where Jesus borrowed a tomb for 3 days and nights. Amos is dealing with this idea.

Amos even throws in Beersheba, a site which is in south Judah. Sites of certain historical tradition where God has shown up in the past does not necessarily mean He will show up there in the future.

But maybe, if I go there, maybe I will experience something. If I go and visit Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, just maybe I can relive the Jesus Movement. If I go and visit the Dallas Seminary campus, perhaps I will feel closer to God. Maybe a visit to Norte Dame Cathedral will do it? Wittenberg, just maybe.

Jesus rose from the dead and moved on.

We tend to gravitate to formula at times as well. God answered this prayer for me in the past, so I need to pray the same way now. God answered my prayer when I prayed at, pick your favorite location, in the past so I need to go and pray there again. This idea of religion over relationship is a problem for Israel and continues as a problem for many today.

We call it tradition, ceremony, ritual. Somehow, we think that should work because it makes us feel like we are doing something to make ourselves more worthy of approaching the throne room. Jesus had a very different idea.

Matthew 6:5–8

“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!” (NLT)

YAHWEH clearly says why not to go to Gilgal or to Bethel. Those relying on Gilgal...captivity. Bethel...death. Seek the Holy One, not the so-called holy place.

Amos 5:6–7

“Seek the LORD so that you may live, Or He will break through like a fire, house of Joseph, And it will consume with no one to extinguish it for Bethel, For those who turn justice into wormwood, And throw righteousness to the earth.” (NASB 2020)

The offer is repeated. “Seek the Lord so that you may live.” The offer though has changed, it is subtle, but reflects the reality of most of the Northern Kingdom.

In verse 4, YAHWEH told the people to seek Him. He was speaking in first person. Then He moved on to reflect on those places of false worship they have been relying on in the past and telling them not to go to them or rely on them, rather rely on Him. Now in verse 6, the wording is no longer first person, but third person.

This implies that those who are being addressed have no idea who is talking or who He is. They do not have a relationship even though YAHWEH chose them. They are relying on that choosing for protection, yet the reality appears here in verse 6, He is a stranger and must speak to them as such.

This time, speaking to those who have drifted so far from Him He must use His name as the one they must seek, He turns immediately to the threat of not turning to Him, threats over the heads of the Northern Kingdom, the house of Joseph.

The threat of fire had been referenced as one of the judgements on the nations earlier in Amos (Amos 1:4,7,10,12,14, 2:2, 5). The only nation not threatened with fire was Israel. Now the specific threat of judgement with fire is placed on the nation of Israel. Their choice though.

Also, unlike the previous call, “there is a conditional ‘lest’ clause following it. This formulation of destruction repeats the previous threat in a way that opens the possibility of choosing life. ‘Seek Yahweh and then you shall live’ sets the conditions down and lays out one option. Life may be chosen or the people can choose to suffer death because of the unquenchable fire of God’s destruction. This possibility of grace should not be watered down but should be understood as a real exhortation (in contrast to 5:4) to seek God.” (Smith, Amos, Mentor Commentaries 1998, 222)

Notice the emphasis on personal choice. Free will comes into play here. Some will repent, as hinted at previously, those left will be 10% of those currently being talked to. Even today it is still a personal choice. This is a choice that most decide against. Jesus made this clear.

Matthew 7:13–14

“Enter through the narrow gate, because the gate is wide and the way is spacious that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. How narrow is the gate and difficult the way that leads to life, and there are few who find it!” (NET 2nd ed.)

Fear of judgment may not be the highest motive for obeying God, but the Lord will accept it. Animals and little children understand rewards and punishments, but we hope that the children will eventually mature and develop higher motives for obedience than receiving some candy or escaping a spanking. (Wiersbe 1996, 48)

The nation of Israel, unfortunately, never matured past needing to be reminded of the curses associated with faithlessness. The response though is not the same Joel saw with Judah.

Fire is threatened and Bethel will burn with no one coming to its aid. And who are those who will be unwilling participants? “For those who turn justice into wormwood, And throw righteousness to the earth.” (Amos 5:7, NASB 2020)

Repenting is the sensible thing to do. But Israel is no longer acting sensibly. First of all, they had to be reminded of the name of who it was they were being invited to seek, and because they had drifted so far from Him, they will also need to be reminded that He is the creator, not anyone else. You see, they have been listening to lies and oppressing their brethren.

“Israel, through the alchemy of greed, had turned justice into “bitterness”—literally, “wormwood,” a small plant known for its bitter pulp, usually associated with poison (cf. 6:12; Deut. 29:18, NASB; Jer. 9:15; 23:15). The judicial system, instead of being like a medicinal herb to heal wrongs and restore the oppressed, had itself become a fatal poison within the nation.” There will be more to come on this topic in a couple of verses. (Sunukjian 1985, 1439)

In the middle of YAHWEH’s telling us why the fire on the house of Joseph unless they repent; comes another reminder of just who is saying all of this and who it is they have challenged with their abusive conduct.

Amos 5:8

“He who made the Pleiades and Orion, And changes deep darkness into morning, Who also darkens day into night, Who calls for the waters of the sea And pours them out on the surface of the earth, The LORD is His name.” (NASB 2020)

What is it that YAHWEH is saying by making specific reference to these two constellations? He is now talking to His own people as non-believers. They have incorporated various elements of different fertility gods into their worship, and some may also be Baal worshippers. There are some misunderstandings due to their ignorance.

Because the Pleiades and Orion are associated with the New Year (Nisan) and thus with the change of the winter and summer seasons, the Lord, the Creator of the natural order, is praised here as the one

who regulates the times and seasons of the year. There may also be here a muted polemic against heathen astral worship. The stars and constellations are not divine but are God's creations. (Paul and Cross 1991, 168)

If you take the time to study the various gods of the area, you learn that the locals had no real idea who created everything. In Egypt, it was a group to include Ra, Amun, Atum, Ptah and Khnum. When you move to Canaan, the nations there had many different ideas. For example, "the god Marduk starts his work of creation by splitting the watery body of Tiamat into two halves. One half of her he reshaped into heaven, the other half into earth. Furthermore he creates man." (Korpel 1999, 208)

Other nations attributed creation to Baal, El, or the Sun-goddess. Another name showed up as well, one which later has a name change to Zeus, Baal-Shamem. In other words, Israel, even though they had the Torah and the true story of creation, because Jeroboam I had kicked out the Levites, there was no one to teach the people what the truth was. They believed the lie and then embraced the lie as the truth. Just like many do today with the lie of creation.

Because of this, YAHWEH clearly reminds His people that He is the creator, and He points this out by showing what He is responsible for, not any other god.

Amos 5:9

"It is He who makes destruction flash upon the strong, So that destruction comes upon the fortress."
(NASB 2020)

One more reminder for Israel of who is really in control, it isn't Baal. Since they had incorporated so much of the Canaanite gods into their worship, attribution for things YAHWEH provided for were given to fallen divine beings and demons. In most cases, Baal had the better press agent.

Baal is seen at work not just in the cyclical pattern of the seasons. He is also called upon to drive away the enemy that attacks the city (KTU 1.119:28-34), which shows that the god also interferes in the domain of human history. (Herrmann 1999, 134)

YAHWEH is sovereign over the universe; He is Israel's covenant God, and He will be the judge of their alleged faithfulness. No one else. He is unchallenged in heaven and on earth.

And after that reminder, YAHWEH again turns to the list of charges against Israel. Legal injustice is at the top of the list.

Amos 5:10

"They hate him who rebukes in the gate, And they despise him who speaks with integrity." (NASB 2020)

In Jewish culture of the day, the one who rebukes in the gate is a judge. This speaks to the corruption in the judicial system of Israel. Judges, if they did their job correctly, were hated by the ruling elite.

They were supposed to be impartial. They were also supposed to attest to the validity of contracts.

What do you do when the judges simply do their job and get in the way of your oppression and corruption? You pack the court, replace or pay off the judges. You find people who do not speak with integrity and can be bought. You redefine the term justice and injustice so that it reflects what it is you want as an outcome.

Proverbs 22:22

"Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate," (ESV)

The ruling elite wanted to rebalance the system to always be in their favor.

The emotions of this rejection of critical voices are strong: hate and abhor. What would cause such rancor? Social class and clout? Economic gain? Irregular land acquisition? Political power? A combination of these factors? The text does not say, but the language underscores the strong dislike for anyone who might get in the way of those in control achieving their goals. (Carroll R., *The Book of Amos*, New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament 2020, 314-315)

Have you noticed that this theme of controlling the system somehow seems to be similar to the one that shows up in the culture today? Both sides in the culture war want to be in control. No one seems to be interested in truth or in rightly judging based on facts and evidence. But spin, ah yes, spin the facts to your favor. In other words, lie as necessary.

God set a standard. There is no grey. But in Israel, power became the standard. Truth became negotiable. Therefore, YAHWEH is having to remind His own people just who He is. Our culture today also has the same issues showing up in it.

Do Americans seek to know and understand moral absolutes? No, because most of them no longer believe that such unconditional parameters exist. Overall, two out of three adults (67%) argue that there are no moral absolutes. Six out of 10 (58%) contend that moral truth is determined by each person based upon what seems right to them. Consistent with that view, only four out of 10 (39%) say that objective moral truth exists. (Barna 2022, 60)

Looking at the pending mid-term election in the United States, a recent Cultural Research Center Survey revealed that 73% of the voting public want something that seems to be at odds with the issue of moral truth. 73% agreed with the statement that “our country is a nation of laws. Justice is fairly and consistently applying those laws to everybody. Candidates who do not vow to uphold our laws without prejudice should not hold office.” (Barna, *A National Moment of Truth: Whose Vision and Values Will Prevail?* 2022)

Due to poor teaching and allowing the enemy to redefine terms, Israel no longer had a Biblical worldview. Neither does the majority of those in the west today. We want politicians to adhere to a standard, yet we are unwilling to follow that same standard.

We are made in the image of God, we want justice, just as the people in Israel wanted justice, but the ruling elite did not want justice, they wanted advantage. They wanted to be able to oppress their brothers and sisters, legally steal from them, and live the good life.

Amos 5:11–13

“Therefore because you impose heavy rent on the poor And take a tribute of grain from them, Though you have built houses of cut stone, Yet you will not live in them; You have planted beautiful vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine. For I know your offenses are many and your sins are great, You who are hostile to the righteous and accept bribes, And turn away the poor from justice at the gate. Therefore at such a time the prudent person keeps quiet, because it is an evil time.” (NASB 2020)

Amos makes it clear what the ruling elite want to do, they want to become rich on the back of their own brothers and sisters. “Therefore because you impose heavy rent on the poor And take a tribute of grain from them...” (Amos 5:11a, NASB 2020)

In the threat of judgment (v. 11) the culprits are once again addressed directly, and the case against them is amplified to include harsh practices of taxation of the peasant sharecroppers. (Hubbard 1989, 181)

The elites have plans. They have become wealthy on the backs of those they are oppressing, and they intend to build high quality estate homes and vineyards. But the Lord tells them that judgement is coming, they will not live in the houses they build and they will not enjoy wine from the vineyards they plant using stolen funds.

They obviously believe that they have earned this, deserved it even. But YAHWEH is letting them know that He knows. I wouldn't be surprised that Amos makes eye contact with those he is talking to connecting individuals to specific sins. But Moses promised.

Deuteronomy 28:30–33

“You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall ravish her. You shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but you shall not enjoy its fruit. Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat any of it. Your donkey shall be seized before your face, but shall not be restored to you. Your sheep shall be given to your enemies, but there shall be no one to help you. Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, while your eyes look on and fail with longing for them all day long, but you shall be helpless. A nation that you have not known shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually,” (ESV)

Amos 5:12–13

“For I know your offenses are many and your sins are great, You who are hostile to the righteous and accept bribes, And turn away the poor from justice at the gate. Therefore at such a time the prudent person keeps quiet, because it is an evil time.” (NASB 2020)

And God knows. “These oppressive nobles forget that however much they may keep secret from men, Jahveh knows.” (Edghill 1914, 52)

What are the charges YAHWEH has charged the ruling elites with?

Over charging rents, heavy unjust taxation, hostility to the righteous. Taking or paying bribes to oppress the righteous. And ensuring that the poor are unable to obtain justice.

He has also promised judgement connected with these crimes. “When the judicial process itself is corrupt, Amos suggests that prudent citizens simply keep quiet. They lose hope of justice. Such a time is indeed “an evil time” (v. 13).” (Birch 1997, 216)

When those being oppressed stop talking about what is happening to them because no one is listening, it is prudent to just remain silent. “This also is a sign of the judgment, that wise men no longer lift up their voice, as it is not listened to. The prophet, of course, must speak, even when regard to prudence forbids it.” (Orelli 1893, 130)

Even with these crimes, and they are extensive, being listed by YAHWEH and discussed by Amos, there is still an offer of grace.

Amos 5:14–15

“Seek good and not evil, so that you may live; And so may the LORD God of armies be with you, Just as you have said! Hate evil, love good, And establish justice in the gate! Perhaps the LORD God of armies Will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.” (NASB 2020)

Those who want to live must seek good. Repeating the call to repentance, Amos affirms that seeking Yahweh is not a matter of religious ritual and location (5:4–7), but of seeking “good and not evil.” (Fuhr and Yates 2016, 132)

YAHWEH does not say zip over to the Temple in Judah and do a sin offering. He simply commands them to seek good and not evil. The call is to repent, to turn, to change.

The command is to “seek good and not evil.” Then, in His grace, He tells His people, though they are still a million miles away, if you do so you will not only live but YAHWEH will be with you.

They think He is with them, but He is telling them that at present, He is not and it is due to the crimes they are allowing and committing. If they seek good and turn from that, life and relationship are promised.

That isn't all, with the promise of grace if they repent, there are three more things that the people of Israel must do:

- Hate evil
- Love good
- Establish justice in the gate

Loving good and hating evil are part and parcel of loving God with all your heart (Deut. 6:5). The specific identification of loving good with the concrete action of establishing justice connects the conditionality of 5:15 with the accusations in 5:10–13. Devotion and morality are not alternatives open to selective acceptance or rejection. (Smith, Amos, Mentor Commentaries 1998, 232)

Grace is offered, but repentance is required. We also see here at the end of verse 15, an acknowledgement that this is not going to be accepted by everyone.

Amos 5:15

“Hate evil, love good, And establish justice in the gate! Perhaps the LORD God of armies Will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.” (NASB 2020)

The nation as a whole appears to be doomed, yet there are individuals in it who have hope and that is being addressed here. They can still separate themselves from the guilty nation and hate evil.

Their assurance, Amos insisted, was a delusion. God was no longer “with them.” The guilty nation had been abandoned (cf. Amos 5:2). Their external prosperity was misleading; it had bred a false security (cf. 6:3; 9:10; Micah 3:11). In reality, there would be only a brief respite before their Sovereign would sweep them away in judgment.

If a handful, however, would turn and passionately seek the Lord, perhaps the great Suzerain would have mercy on that small repentant remnant of the Northern Kingdom, here called Joseph. (Sunukjian 1985, 1440)

This is the only time Amos used the word *khanan* (mercy). This verb means “show favor, be gracious” and usually occurs with God as the subject (cf. NIDOTTE 2.203–206). The prophet had hope that perhaps God would show mercy to the people who remained because that is an aspect of his character—he has the capacity to show mercy to anyone he chooses (Exod 33:19). (Patterson and Hill 2008, 186)

We see a culture all around us in meltdown, just like Amos saw. The only hope we have is the Lord, just like Israel. Will it only be a remnant like Israel? At present, that may be the case.

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)

Today, that is a hard message for many to believe, in fact, it is near scandalous. Surely there must be numerous ways to heaven. No, there isn't. Israel thought that way too and discovered the same truth. It isn't tied to ritual, place, negotiation or being good.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

How do we do that?

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.
- D. Repentance is what God required of Israel, they didn’t repent, and they were judged and sent into exile.

Only a remnant remained. He stands ready to save and ready to make all things new today. It is our choice.

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