

04 February 24
(Week 23)

Amos
God is Not Fooled
Focal Verses: Amos 5:14-15, 18-27

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **ANALYZE** how God establishes justice for the righteous and punishes deceivers; **RECOGNIZE** and **REFLECT** on actions of injustice within the community of faith; and **IDENTIFY** unjust practices, commit to stop our participation in them and help others do the same.

In Focus

The check engine light had been blinking in Regina’s car for almost a week, so she finally took it in for service. While waiting, Regina noticed a young woman and her three children make their way into the auto shop from a nearby bus stop. The young woman attempted to make a payment toward the repair of her vehicle that was stored behind the shop. The shop owner told the woman, “Ma’am, I’ve held your car here as long as I can. I’m within my legal rights to sell that vehicle. If you don’t pay your balance by tomorrow, I’m selling it.” As the woman left the shop, Regina heard the shop owner mutter to himself, “It’ll be hard to pay up without a bus to get you here.” Regina realized tomorrow was a Sunday and the buses wouldn’t be servicing this route. The woman would have no way to get her payment to the shop. On her way home, Regina saw the woman and her children walking a few blocks away from the shop. Regina pulled alongside them and offered to give the woman a ride back to the shop the next day.

God desires that we would pursue justice and oppose evil. In today’s lesson, we will discuss how we can do this in our own lives.

Keep In Mind

“But let judgment run down like waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.” (Amos 5:24 NKJV)

Lesson Text
Amos 5:14-15, 18-27

14 Seek good and not evil, that ye may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light:

19 as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

20 Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?

21 “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell the scent in your solemn assemblies.

22 Though ye offer Me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

23 Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

24 But let judgment run down like waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

25 “Have ye offered unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god which ye made for yourselves.

27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus,” saith the Lord, whose name is The God of Hosts.

The Lesson

The People, Places and Times

Feast Days: There were three major feast days in the nation of Israel: the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), the Feast of Harvest (Pentecost), and the Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles). These were pilgrimage festivals that required participation from the entire Israelite community. All work was to cease, and travelers made their way from all over Israel to celebrate these festivals in Jerusalem.

Sikkuth (Moloch): Sikkuth is another name for the Mesopotamian astral deity Sakkut (Ninib). This god was also associated with the planet Saturn. It was commonly believed that this god was not introduced until after the Assyrian conquest, but recent scholarship has revealed that Aramean merchants and other foreign travelers helped to spread the worship of Sikkuth in Israel. original vowels were often replaced with the vowels from the Hebrew word for “abomination.” The Phoenicians were thought to offer human sacrifices to this god.

Kaiwan (Chiun): Kaiwan was the Babylonian Saturn god. The name means “the steadiest one” and is taken from the planet Saturn’s slow-moving orbit. The differences in spelling are likely because when foreign gods were referenced, the original vowels were often replaced with the

vowels from the Hebrew word for “abomination.” The Phoenicians were thought to offer human sacrifices to this god.

Background

Amos begins chapter 5 as a eulogy for the “dead” nation of Israel. Israel was not yet dead, but the lament was meant to impress on the nation the severe danger it was in. The death of Israel is described as the death of a virgin (v. 2). The death of a virgin would have been considered particularly tragic because she had no children to carry on her memory. This type of death is distinctly permanent. Furthermore, the dead virgin is described as having been left lying in a field, unburied. To leave a body unburied would have been a shocking and appalling image to consider, yet this is how the demise of Israel is described. Its depraved moral climate and refusal to turn back to God had indeed set it on the path of destruction.

Israel could not trust in the power of its armies to defend them against the coming destruction. Amos declared that their armies will be systematically cut down in battle (v. 3). Their trust in false gods was misplaced. The Israelites were known to visit idol temples in Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba. But Amos announced that each of these is set for destruction as well. Their only hope was to return to God. Amos repeatedly declared the way of escape for some. If they will seek after God, they will live (vv. 4, 6). Despite Amos’ lament, he presented God’s offer to save a remnant who will turn to Him.

In Depth

1. Love Good, Hate Evil (Amos 5:14–15) Israel has become complacent in their presumption of God’s favor (v. 14). Israel has mistakenly believed that, despite their sinful ways and their worship of other gods, they can still count on God’s protection. However, Amos declared to them that their actions have displeased God and will result in the destruction of their nation. In order for some to be spared, they must both seek good and avoid evil. The twofold action of seeking and avoiding is emphasized in verse 15. They are to “hate” the evil and “love” the good. The terms “hate” and “love” indicate decisions that one must make. Seeking good is connected with choosing to love good. Avoiding evil is connected to choosing to hate evil.

2. A Day of Darkness (Amos 5:18–20) Again, the prophet’s message seizes on Israel’s presumption of God’s favor. It was common in times of trouble for the Israelites to long for “the day of the LORD,” when God would rescue them from their enemies. But “the day of the LORD” will now be a day of reckoning. For those who have turned to idols and denied justice to the poor, there will be no rescue, but rather darkness and judgment waiting for them. This will be a jarring turn of events for Israel. It is described metaphorically like escaping a lion, only to find that you must escape a bear; then resting at home, only to find that a snake is waiting to bite you.

3. God Desires Justice, Not Empty Rituals (Amos 5: 21–24) The worship of other gods had seeped into Israel’s religious practices, but the people still maintained their Israelite rituals and festivals too. However, God is not fooled by their empty worship. True worship flows out of the

hearts of those who earnestly seek to follow God's will. A true worshiper's relationships and personal life will be consistent with his or her public worship. Israel's worship is hypocritical. They publicly give offerings to God and worship Him with their music, but they continue to reject justice and righteousness in their everyday lives. Their religious practices have become distasteful to God, and He refuses their show of piety. Rather than continued injustice and hypocrisy, the Lord desires a continual, daily flow of justice and righteousness.

4. Israel's Idolatry Results in Exile (Amos 5: 25–27) Israel's unfaithfulness is called out here. In addition to making offerings to Yahweh, they have begun worshiping foreign deities. Idol worship often included parades in which the people would carry handmade representations of their gods. Amos describes an image that depicts Israel, the chosen people of Yahweh the one true God, carrying around idols made to worship other gods (v. 26). It is a sad betrayal of the God who had redeemed them. Idolatry leads to injustice. It is at the root of their oppression of others and their choosing to love evil and not good. As a result, the Lord will send them into exile—what happens to all those who choose other gods.

Liberating Lesson

Most Christians have no problem determining the difference between good and evil. In fact, even non-believers often choose to do the right thing. But merely choosing not to do evil is different than actively opposing evil. Opposing evil requires a level of conviction that goes beyond a simple understanding of right and wrong. This concept has been examined in social experiments and hidden camera television shows. During these experiments, an unsuspecting participant is presented with a scenario that requires that he or she make a moral determination of what is right or wrong. Generally, participants will choose to do the right thing. The scenario is then changed slightly. Now the participant is presented with a scenario in which someone is doing wrong to another person. The participant must decide to either intervene or ignore the injustice they are witnessing. It is often the case that only certain individuals will go out of their way to oppose injustice. Most people are content to sit by while others are treated unfairly. It is God's desire that Christians would not only seek to do good but also oppose evil and injustice. We are charged with standing for justice in our communities and in our world.

Application for Activation

It is often difficult in the moment to choose to love good and hate evil. One way to be prepared for those times and situations where we have decisions to make is to determine what is good or evil. Get a piece of paper and on one side write "Love Good" and on the other side write "Hate Evil." On the "Love Good" side, write all the ways you can seek good in your daily life. On the "Hate Evil" side, write all the ways you can hate evil in your daily life. Thinking about these things beforehand can help us not only avoid falling into sin but also move us forward in serving others in our community.

Take Aways

Closing Prayer

**Week of 04 February 24
Daily Bible Readings**



Monday – Job 10-13

Tuesday – Job 14-16

Wednesday – Job 17-20

Thursday – Job 21-23

Friday - Job 24-28

Saturday – Job 29-31

Sunday – Job 32-34