

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Amos 5:10-27

New Revised Standard Version

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, June 14, 2015

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The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, June 14, 2015**, is from **Amos 5:10-27**. Please Note: Some churches will only study **Amos 5:14-15, 18-27**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. A podcast for this commentary is also available at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

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Amos 5:10-27

(Amos 5:10) They hate the one who reproves in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.

Through Amos, God described some of the character traits of those He would soon judge and condemn to death or exile when the Assyrians invaded and destroyed the Kingdom of Israel. "The gate" was the courtroom at the city gate often built into the city wall where the elders of the city heard cases and passed judgment. Whenever a judge ruled against someone for their immoral acts, the one judged hated the judge rather than repent and obey God and God's commands. Furthermore, they hated, detested, despised, and abhorred the person who told them the truth about them and how they needed to conform to the ways of God. Unfortunately, as we learn from Amos, Israel had very few righteous elders or judges who ruled justly and spoke the truth.

(Amos 5:11) Therefore because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.

The Bible does not condemn someone for being wealthy. The Bible does not condone or promote warfare between people of different economic backgrounds and classes. The Bible does condemn acquiring wealth in immoral and unjust ways. The Bible tells people to care for the poor, and the Law of God in the Old Testament gives rules on how the poor could and should work for their food (see the Book of Ruth). In the Kingdom of Israel, many wealthy people had built large houses and planted large vineyards by taxing the poor and charging outrageous rent to keep them enslaved. God condemned their unloving and unjust actions, and God condemned them to death or exile away from their home and vineyards, to where they could not drink the wine of their vineyards.

(Amos 5:12) For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins—you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and push aside the needy in the gate.

God through Amos became more detailed in why He would judge the Kingdom of Israel. God sees what people do; how people treat others, and how people are treated by others. God sees the sins and transgressions of people, especially the sins of those who know the Law of God and who violate His laws with arrogance and disbelief that God will punish them. God sees every time a sinner afflicts someone who is righteous, especially when that sinner claims to be a follower of God. A person who is righteous is in a right relationship with God because as he lives by faith in God he loves and obeys God. God sees the sinner who offers, gives, or receives a bribe, and God sees those who suffer and are denied justice because of bribes. God sees when a judge or powerful or wealthy person pushes aside a needy person who is seeking justice at the gate, the courtroom in the Kingdom of Israel.

(Amos 5:13) Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time; for it is an evil time.

Amos wrote advice similar to Proverbs 10:19—“When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but the prudent are restrained in speech.” The times were so evil in Israel, and the powerful and wealthy rulers and the religious and business leaders in Israel were so evil and unjust that they afflicted the righteous and the needy; therefore, God advised the wise person to be careful and keep quiet. While keeping quiet, the righteous and wise person could still pray. The righteous person would do what God said through Amos: “For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: Seek me and live. . . . Seek the LORD and live, or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it (Amos 5:4, 6).

(Amos 5:14) Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said.

Those doing evil could repent and return to God as Amos preached, but since they refused to hear the truth and abhorred the one who spoke the truth, they would not repent. While preaching to the unrepentant, Amos also spoke God's words to the righteous person who is prudent. The righteous person will seek good and not evil, unlike his oppressors in Israel; therefore, the righteous person will live with God forever even though he or she may die as a martyr at the hands of the unrighteous Israelites or Assyrians. No matter what happens, the LORD of an angelic army will be with the righteous.

(Amos 5:15) Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

God called Amos to preach a message of repentance and return to faith, a message of hope, but the Kingdom of Israel would not turn back to the LORD. The righteous person can and is commanded to hate evil, while he can love his enemy and pray that his enemy comes to repentance and faith in God. Joseph was a righteous brother out of his 12 brothers, and he saved his family because God is gracious. God would save a righteous remnant, but Amos held out the promise that if the people began to practice and receive justice in their relationships and in the courts then God would save the Kingdom of Israel, but they would not repent and God had to destroy the Kingdom as just punishment for their sins and as a warning to others.

(Amos 5:16) Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord: In all the squares there shall be wailing; and in all the streets they shall say, "Alas! alas!" They shall call the farmers to mourning, and those skilled in lamentation, to wailing;

Amos foretold what would happen if the leaders of the people continued to act and judge unjustly. The destruction of the Kingdom of Israel and the judgment of God would serve as a warning to other nations and people, but the Kingdom of Judah did not listen or learn from the example of their northern neighbor; therefore Judah was destroyed in 586 BC and again in 70 AD. The wailing Amos described could be compared to the crying throughout Egypt on the night of the first Passover when God freed the Israelites from slavery. No city, town, or farm would be spared the conquest of the Assyrian army.

(Amos 5:17) in all the vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through the midst of you, says the LORD.

As God passed through Egypt, essentially for the same injustices that were now being perpetrated by the wicked rich and powerful in Israel, so God would pass through Israel. As Amos declared earlier, the vineyards and the wine they produced would pass to others, to the enemies of Israel. Those who practiced evil for unjust gain would lose

everything they thought they had gained. Having turned from God, they would never live with God unless they repented and returned to faith in God.

(Amos 5:18) Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you want the day of the LORD? It is darkness, not light;

Those who desired the “day of the LORD” were primarily the religious leaders, and the powerful business and political leaders who wanted to increase their control over others and their wealth by the LORD or the Messiah coming and defeating all of their neighbors in battle so they could have their land, their slaves, and other possessions. Their gods were wealth and power, not the true God. But the day of the Lord will be a day of darkness and judgment and death for the unrighteous and unjust leaders with their idols in the Kingdom of Israel.

(Amos 5:19) as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear; or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake.

The day of the LORD would come upon Israel’s neighbors, but it would also come upon the Kingdom of Israel. On the day of the Lord, life for fleeing sinners would go from bad to worse. If they were not killed by a symbolic lion, they would be killed by a symbolic bear; if not by an archer then by a swordsman. They would die because they chose not to seek the Lord and live; instead they sought evil. They would not even be safe in their own home: the large and luxurious home that they had made of stone would not protect them from the invader and death.

(Amos 5:20) Is not the day of the LORD darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

The light shined in the darkness when Jesus came a little more than 700 years after the fall of the Kingdom of Israel, and Jesus preached in both the northern and southern kingdoms when He came. During the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel, there was no light and no truth, no prophet (or profit) and no promise, no hope and no brightness. Amos preached only gloom and judgment for the nation, which came in 722 BC.

(Amos 5:21) I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

God hated their festivals and assemblies because they were performed before idols created by Jeroboam I (two gold bulls) that the priests had given the name of the LORD. Furthermore, the Israelites who were unjust and wicked thought they could steal from and oppress the poor and the righteous and they could escape God’s punishment because of their participation in religious rituals. God said He hated their attitude, false beliefs, and unjust treatment of others.

(Amos 5:22) Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon.

God will not look upon the offerings and sacrifices of wicked people. Many rich and powerful leaders in the Kingdom of Israel could afford to offer multitudes of offerings and animals to God because they had stolen from the poor and the righteous. Of course, God would accept the offerings and sacrifices of the righteous, of those who did what God said, of those who sought God and good.

(Amos 5:23) Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

From people whose hearts were far from Him, God did not want to hear songs that they sang supposedly in praise of Him. He did not want to hear songs: from people whose hearts sought unjust gain, who oppressed the poor, who stole from the righteous, who used their ill-gotten wealth to build larger houses and expand their land holdings and their vineyards.

(Amos 5:24) But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Instead of hypocritical worship, God wanted a nation or kingdom with individuals who upheld justice and righteousness in the law courts, in places of worship, and in personal relationships. God wanted a kingdom that promoted justice and righteousness in all aspects of life at all times even as an ever-flowing stream. Israel, the northern kingdom, and later Judah, the southern kingdom, refused to uphold and promote justice and righteousness in their kingdoms; instead the powerful and wealthy took advantage of their positions over others to steal from the less fortunate and God-fearing people.

(Amos 5:25) Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

During their wilderness wandering God fed the Israelites quail and manna; therefore, sacrifices on a large scale, as in the days of King David and King Solomon, were not possible. The Israelites gave what they could to the LORD during their time in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land, and their offerings enabled Moses to build the tabernacle for worship, create the priests' garments, and fashion other implements for worship. The "house of Israel" as a separate kingdom was not literally established until after King Solomon's death; therefore, the "house of Israel" never literally offered sacrifices to the true God in the wilderness or to the true God in the northern kingdom.

(Amos 5:26) You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your images, which you made for yourselves;

Except for the time Aaron misled the Hebrews to worship the golden calf he created during their wilderness wandering, the Hebrews worshiped the LORD in the wilderness as God directed through Moses. In the Kingdom of Israel, the priests misled the people to worship idols. In addition to worshiping idols with God's name given to them by their leaders to mislead the people, the religious leaders also led them to worship the idols of their enemies; such as, Sakkuth and Kaiwan.

(Amos 5:27) therefore I will take you into exile beyond Damascus, says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.

Because the house of Israel had become totally corrupt, so corrupt it would not listen to those who spoke the truth and afflicted the righteous and the poor, they would reap what they sowed. They would lose everything, just as those they stole from had lost everything at their wicked hands. Only those who sought the LORD would live eternally with the LORD because they lived by faith in the LORD.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think God sent Amos from the Kingdom of Judah to preach as a prophet in the Kingdom of Israel?
2. Did God condemn all wealthy people through Amos message? Give a reason for your answer.
3. Why did many of the political and religious leaders in Israel keep looking for the promised "Day of the LORD" with eager expectation?
4. What did Amos say the "Day of the LORD" would mean for Israel?
5. What hope did Amos give the repentant and righteous?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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