

Sermon, September 18, 2011
“Empty Worship”, Amos 5:15-27
Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy

The Books of Prophecy

- Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel
- Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, **Amos**, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Overview of Amos:

- The prophet Amos is the author.
- Amos means “burden-bearer”.
- The book is directed to the northern kingdom of Israel.
- The time of the writings are between 793-740 BC
- Contemporary of Jonah, Isaiah, and Hosea
- Time of material prosperity, but spiritual decay.
- **Overall Outline of Amos:**
 - I. Judgment on Israel’s neighbors (1)
 - II. Judgment against Judah and Israel (2)
 - III. Israel’s guilt and punishment (3)
 - IV. Israel’s rejects correction (4)
 - V. Israel’s moral decay (5-6)
 - V. Five Visions of Judgment and Restoration (7-9)

Major Themes of Amos¹:

- Amos addresses Israel’s two primary sins:
 - 1) an absence of true worship, and
 - 2) a lack of justice.
- In the midst of their ritualistic performance of worship, they were not pursuing the Lord with their hearts (4:4,5; 5:4–6) nor following His standard of justice with their neighbors (5:10–13; 6:12).
- This apostasy, evidenced by continual, willful rejection of the prophetic message of Amos, is promised divine judgment.
- Because of His covenant, however, the Lord will not abandon Israel altogether, but will bring future restoration to the righteous remnant (9:7–15).

True worship of God is not in empty ritual, tradition, and ceremony; True worship is a Spirit filled heart relating to and expressing the truth of God’s word.

1. True believers do not live outside of the scope of Christian love, compassion, kindness, goodness...then expect God’s grace (Amos 5:15-17).

- First of all, the northern kingdom of Israel, (Samaria; Mt. Gerizim) was not interested in hearing the Word of God. **Amos 2:12** *And you commanded the prophets saying, ‘You shall not prophesy!’*
- The ruling class was living a materialistic life of abundance, living in an unjust manner, abusing their power and wealth.
- **Amos 3:15; Amos 6:4-6; Amos 2:6-7** *Because they sell the righteous for money And the needy for a pair of sandals. ⁷ “These who pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless Also turn aside the way of the humble;*
- The people were living a life of un-holiness while expecting God’s blessings; setting their desires on the world yet expecting God to come through for them; treating others as they would NOT want to be treated but expecting God to vindicate them...

¹ MacArthur, John Jr: The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Am 1:1

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2. **The Day of the Lord has turned from a day of vindication to a day of judgment for those who live with one foot in the world and worship God at their convenience (Amos 5:18-20).**
 - The northern kingdom continued in their evil ways all the time waiting for the “Day of the Lord”. Waiting for the time God would step in and destroy their enemies, setting everything right for them so they could continue in their behavior... a materialistic lifestyle, abusing power, wealth and others.
 - The Day of the Lord would come for them... the day of judgment!
 - You cannot say you are a Christian and live like you are NOT one. You cannot wait for the Day of the Lord to come for salvation (fleeing from the lion) and not expect judgment (the bear); desire rest in the safety of your house (salvation) and be bitten by a snake (judgment).
 - God does save and God does judge!
 - As a Christian, You are called to live a life of love, compassion, and justice... a heart truly given to God, with a true heart, to truly worship!

3. **God does not want, desire, or accept worship that is not done in spirit and truth (Amos 5:21-23).**
 - You cannot come to God with empty worship... He will not accept it.
 - Jesus, roughly 800 years later would confront the woman at the well in the same Samaritan region...
 - **John 4:23-24** *23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*
 - True worship is worship in spirit and truth
 - Not being in the right place or going through the right motions.
 - The Father wants worshippers who love Him with their whole heart, soul, mind, and strength,
 - The Father wants worshippers who come to Him with their whole being, their deep inner spirit wanting a relationship with Him,
 - The Father desires your worship to be from your heart, seek His truth through His Word
 - ***True worship relates to the Word of God and expresses it in our actions through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us.***
 - Listen for His voice in the Scriptures read and the Word proclaimed, prayed, and sung.
 - The first 4 commandments delivered to us in Exodus 20... He wants you to worship Him and Him only, not to replace him with false idols, to honor His name, and keep holy the Sabbath
 - The truth of worship is informed by the Word of the Father, not “the fathers” of tradition...
 - True worship is not empty! True worship is spirit filled!

4. **Where do you stand? God will not be mocked (Amos 5:24-27).**
 - Acknowledge, accept and apply the righteousness you have received in Jesus Christ!
 - Let your behavior reflect the walk and life of Jesus, let justice roll down like waters...
 - Get rid of your idols whatever they are... tradition, ritual, rote recitations of prayers, money, cars, sports, TV, online, smart phones, ...
 - **Galatians 6:7-8** ⁷ *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*
 - ***True worship of God is not in empty ritual, tradition, and ceremony; True worship is a Spirit filled heart relating to and expressing the truth of God's word.***
 - Worship God in the fullness of spirit and truth.