

Message #6**Amos 5:1-27**

I am sure if you were to talk to most people and ask them what do you think about religion, most would probably say religion is good. It is nice for people to have their beliefs and have their places of worship. Even most leaders of the world conclude all religion is good.

In fact, I am sure that if you went to most churches and asked what do you think about the church and all of the modern stuff that is happening such as the music, most would say we think it is great. It brings the people in and the kids like it. It is a good time for everyone and the numbers are good.

Just recently, a person from another church told me we have seen more people coming to church since we put a drum set on the platform. Most people like the idea. He said there are a few old timers who don't think it is right, but they cannot argue with the fact that more people are coming.

I wonder what the answer we would get if we asked God? I wonder what God would say to all of this religious stuff that is taking place that is really not being built on a foundation of careful teaching of the Scriptures. What do you think God would say if we asked Him what do you think about the churches that are bringing the people in with their music and lack of careful commitment to the exposition of His Word?

We get the answer to that question right here in Amos 5 and what God says is "I hate it." In fact, **verse 1** challenges the people to "Hear" God's Word. It wasn't that they didn't have religious services that featured a lot of good music. They had lots of good music, which God says is just a bunch of "noise" that He refuses to even listen to (**5:23**). **What God says to this group of religious people, who were His own people, who had all of their religious services is "I hate it" and "I reject it" (5:21).** These people were not dedicated to the Word of God and God says I hate everything you are doing.

Now most people don't like to hear the word hate. Years ago in another ministry, in fact it was Pocatello, I was teaching on the attributes of God and one of the attributes that God reveals about Himself is that He is a God who hates things so I was teaching on the attribute of hate. Some of the people didn't like that. In fact, one couple came to my office and questioned the attribute of hate and when I opened my Bible to Proverbs 6 where God says He hates certain things, he actually threw the Bible down. Most people don't want to think of a God who could hate things because they don't want to face the possibility that God may not feel so positive about them.

That is precisely the problem that existed in Israel in the days of Amos. The problem in the days of Amos was not lack of worship. People went to their worship services regularly. The problem was a lack of commitment to carefully hear and apply the Word of God. So when we come to Amos 5, the point Amos wants to make is this:

GOD HATES ANY RELIGION AND ANY CHURCH THAT IS NOT FOCUSED ON CAREFULLY UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING HIS WORD AND IF HIS OWN PEOPLE DO NOT GET AWAY FROM IT, HE WILL SPECIFICALLY TARGET THEM AND SEND NEGATIVE JUDGMENTAL THINGS AGAINST THEM.

Now we may observe that Amos challenges these highly religious people multiple times to “seek the LORD” (5:4, 6, 14). So these people were going to worship services, but they were not going to the services so they could “seek” a true relationship with God that was based on accurately understanding and applying God’s Word.

These people were going to their worship services for other reasons than hearing the Word so they could seek a close relationship with God. Some of those reasons are stated in this very context:

- 1) They liked their worship (5:21);
- 2) They liked to give offerings (5:22);
- 3) They liked the music (5:23).

They were doing all of this stuff not really interested in seeking a true relationship with God that was based on His Word. So in **Amos 5**, God gives a series of seven warning messages to Israel:

WARNING MESSAGE #1 – Amos says God’s own people are dead. **5:1-3**

In **verse 1**, Amos says I am taking up for you a “dirge.” This particular Hebrew word (kinah) is one that refers to a funeral lament over a death. A dirge was some form of verbal mourning over the death of a person, a city or a nation.

This is so ironic because Israel is at the peak of prosperity. She is enjoying a good, happy, carefree life. So this must have been a shock when Amos starts mourning over her like she was dead. In fact, his message is so real that he presents it as if nothing could stop it and it was already done. **She was dead spiritually and was about to become dead physically.**

In **verses 2-3**, Amos describes what would happen. Israel thought of herself as the great “virgin Israel.” She thought of herself as a group of people who were lily white, like a pure virgin in the sight of God. She had her worship and she had her festivals and Amos says you have so neglected the Word of God that you will end up a corpse in your own land.

Amos says what you don’t realize is that God is about to destroy 90% of you. Amos says I don’t care what size of army you have 1000 or 100, only 10% are going to survive. In other words, God has pronounced a death sentence on you.

Now people who go to church don’t want to think that God would ever do something like that to His own people. People who go to their church don’t ever want to believe that God would target them for premature death.

Well, the Apostle John, who was the “beloved” apostle, said to the church, “there is a sin leading to death”(I John 5:16). The Apostle Paul said some in the church of Corinth were dead as a judgment of God (I Cor. 11:30). Jesus Christ specifically addressed churches and He warned the church of Thyatira that He would start “killing” His own people if they did not repent (Rev. 2:23). If God’s people don’t get serious about Him and His Word, He will only put up with that for so long and then He will target His own people for judgment.

Move away from a focus on God’s Word and God can and will judge His own people. This is true for a nation, this is true for a theological institution, this is true for a church and for individuals. He can and He will kill the life which is exactly what Amos is saying to Israel.

WARNING MESSAGE #2 – Amos says God’s people worshipped at the wrong places and in the wrong ways. **5:4-7**

Now after giving this death warning, Amos presents a message of grace in **verse 4** which was **there is still time to seek the Lord**. There was still time to change and get serious about God and His Word. God called out to His people to respond to Him.

However, He says do not go to your places of worship to seek Me because I don’t accept anything those places are doing. I don’t accept their worship as true worship.

Now, in **verse 5** Amos lists a series of places that Israel had made as their special places of worship: Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba. Bethel and Gilgal were north of Jerusalem in Israel and Beersheba was south of Jerusalem in Judah. So both the north and the south were not too serious about the Word of God. **The place where God said they were supposed to worship was Jerusalem**, but they had actually invented their own places and forms of worship. God says if you are going to seek me you will have to leave your church and go to the place where My Word is actually carefully taught.

It would take real humility and a real dedication to the Word of God for them to leave their places of worship and go to the one place where the Word of God was carefully taught. They would have to swallow their pride and that is exactly what God demanded.

In fact, in **verse 6** Amos says seek the LORD so you may live because if you don’t God will bring down the house of Joseph and He will turn your lives into a bitter wormwood existence by His righteous judgment. These people were going to different places of worship that were not feeding them God’s Word and God says, “I don’t accept it.” If you persist in going to these places, you will reap My judgment.

There are people who are going to churches where they are not being carefully taught the Scriptures and they know it. The counsel of Amos is get out of there. Don’t go to those churches anymore. You go to where the Word of God is carefully taught.

WARNING MESSAGE #3 – Amos reminds God’s people that He has all sovereign power to do destructive things to His people. **5:8-9**

Amos was a shepherd who spent a great deal of time in the outdoors. **He wanted to remind God’s people that God has all sovereign power in heaven and on earth to cause His people’s worlds to totally cave in.**

Now to emphasize how sovereign God is, Amos says–

- 1) God is sovereign over constellations in the sky and seasons on earth. **5:8a**
The constellation of Pleiades signals the return of spring and the constellation of Orion signals the return of winter.
- 2) God is sovereign over light and darkness every day. **5:8b**
- 3) God is sovereign over all uses of water. **5:8c**
- 4) God is sovereign over all destruction that comes upon anyone. **5:9**

Amos is warning God’s people you had better seek a relationship with this God based on His Word, because this sovereign God can cause your world to be destroyed.

WARNING MESSAGE #4 – Amos warns God’s people that He will judge because His people hate His Word and love their sin. **5:10-13**

Look carefully at **verse 10**; they hate one who preaches truth. They hate one who speaks with integrity. They hate a man of God who will look them in the eyes and actually teach them the Word of God. Keep in mind that these were God’s own people who were going to worship services. But they hated anyone who told them the Word of God, which reproved them or convicted them. They did not want to hear God’s Word.

In **verse 11**, we see that they were going to worship and taking advantage of people. They had their nice homes, but they were charging people too much for rent and taxing them on everything. They had their vineyards and wine and when the righteous people went to appeal, they offered bribe money to deprive the people right with God of true justice (**v. 12**). In fact, things were so evil that the prudent person right with God kept silent (**v. 13**).

God says to His own people, I know all of your “transgressions” and “sins.” My grace period is just about over. You need to seek Me right now or you will die.

WARNING MESSAGE #5 – Amos challenges God’s people to change their ways. **5:14-15**

This is a fascinating series of verses. God’s people do not deserve God’s grace. They have failed Him so many times that what they deserve is His judgment. But Amos says if you will hear the Word of God and seek to do what is good in His sight, if you will love good and hate evil and do what is right, perhaps **God would be gracious to His people.**

Now He identifies God as “the LORD God of hosts.” This title means that God is in a covenant relationship with His people and He is the sovereign creator and controller of all things in heaven and on earth.

If His people get serious about His Word and changing, God may turn everything around and bless rather than curse. This is what this nation needs to know. This is what this city needs to know. This is what churches need to know and this is what we need to know.

When God’s people transgress against Him, He does not owe us grace. In fact, if it is grace it cannot be owed to us. But if His people would actually start obeying the Word of God, God’s character is one that does offer grace.

WARNING MESSAGE #6 – Amos actually states God’s prediction that Israel would not change. **5:16-20**

God says because I know you will not change, I am looking into the future and see the mourning that will come from the devastation I will bring. In fact, in **verse 17** He uses the same language that He used in the Egyptian plague when He said that He would pass through the land. God would literally pass through His own people and those who were not right with Him would be destroyed. God says I will examine everyone and you will pay.

In **verse 18** he says **you people think the day of the Lord is going to be such a positive day for you; well, it is going to be a ferocious day against you.** It will be a day of darkness and you will be on the run like you would run from a lion or bear (**v. 19**). God says you think you are so secure in your wealthy homes, well, you will lean your hand on a wall in your home and a deadly snake will bite you (**v. 19**).

This is clearly a Tribulation prediction of the hardships that will come against Israel just before Jesus Christ returns. God says to Israel, you are not serious about Me or My Word and you will not repent, but you will be judged.

I am here to tell you that there are many people going to churches today who think when they see Jesus Christ it is going to be a positive experience. But may I warn each of us of the words of the Apostle John who said when we see Christ, there are two ways we can face Him: in confidence because we know we took in the Word of God and applied it or we may face Him in shame because we know we were not responding to God’s Word (I John 2:28).

WARNING MESSAGE #7 – Amos says God hates their religious activity and does not accept it as true worship. **5:21-27**

I am not at peace with My own people. Their religion is a show and a sham. It has ritual but not righteousness based on My Word.

God says not only don't I accept what you call worship, I hate it. God says you people gather together at your church services and I don't accept it as worship. Look at **verse 23**; the stuff you call worship music you can keep. In fact, get it out of my sight because it is just a bunch of noise. You can bring in your stringed instruments, but I do not like it or listen to it.

Look at **verse 24**; God says I want My Word understood and applied. I demand true Biblical righteousness to flow continually like an "ever flowing stream."

God hates any religion or church that is not dedicated to carefully understanding and applying His precious Word. There is no real life to it.

In **verses 25-26**, God says I have seen Israel's religious hypocrisy ever since I delivered you from Egypt. From the very beginning you have been devoted to anything but My Word. You actually carried shrines and images of false deities like Sikkuth and Kiyyun.

God says I have seen enough, I have had enough and I am going to bring ferocious judgment against you (**v. 27**). Your life of ease is just about over. You are going into exile beyond Damascus.

Now most people are impressed with the big cathedrals and pipe organs. Most people are impressed with the big choirs or big bands that are put up on big screen TV's. Most people love the guitars and the drums. I am here to tell you it means zero to God.

This nation of ours presents the idea that we have "freedom of religion." You have the freedom to worship in any way you want. Well, this book of Amos warns that if people are not serious about carefully understanding and applying the Word and warnings of God, the LORD God of hosts will use His mighty sovereign power to destroy the people.

There are people who are going to churches today and they need to get out of those churches. They are going to places where they are not being carefully taught the Word of God so they can change. They have their music and they have their services and their formats, but those services are not devoted to carefully understanding the Word of God. Please get out of there before it is too late. God does not tolerate things forever. He has a time limit for a nation and for an individual.

The challenge of Amos to Israel is relevant to us—"Seek the LORD that you may live." I believe we need to be like Amos. It is time that you look some people square in the eyes and tell them you need to get out of your church. Your church is not serious about the Word of God and you need to seek out a church that is.