

A Study of Amos 5

Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel: ² “Fallen, no more to rise, is the virgin Israel; forsaken on her land, with none to raise her up.” ³ For thus says the Lord GOD: “The city that went out a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went out a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel.” ⁴ For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: “Seek me and live; ⁵ but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing.” ⁶ Seek the LORD and live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel, ⁷ O you who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth! ⁸ He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning and darkens the 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; ⁹ who makes destruction flash forth against the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress. ¹⁰ They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth. ¹¹ Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. 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 turn aside the needy in the gate. ¹³ Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time, for it is an evil time. ¹⁴ Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said. 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. 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 to wailing those who are skilled in lamentation, ¹⁷ and in all vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through your midst,” says the LORD.

We back up a little to 5:1 to see that this is a lamentation for Israel. It does not matter whether the lamentation is from Amos or God – it establishes that God’s judgment does not bring joy, but as we learned last week, it does offer hope.

In verses 4-6, what is God’s instruction to Israel if it wants to survive the judgment?

From what we have studied in the prophets (and throughout the Bible), what does this mean specifically that Israel needs to do?

Verse 4 gives one of the conditions for seeking God. Why does God say to avoid these three places?

“Seek the Lord and live” communicates an important part of God’s plan for humanity. What does God mean by “live”?

What is the main complaint against Israel, which is summarized in verse 7?

Verses 8-9 are most likely from an older hymn sung by the Israelites. What point is being made here? What does it tell us about God?

Verses 10-13 lists specific sins of Israel. What are they?

How has Israel failed according to these sins? How are they connected to the sins of idolatry and syncretism?

Verses 14-15 echo what we read in verses 4-6. How are “seeking good” and “seeking the LORD” connected?

What is the difference between doing good and loving good?

The end of verse 15 has an element of hope, but vv. 16-17 return to judgment. What does this tell us that God knows about His call to repentance?

How can we “seek the LORD” and “love good” in our context?