

The Woes of Israel (Chapter 6)

Chapter 6 again lists some specific complaints against Israel, shattering their ideas that they were somehow impervious to God's judgment.

Think of some instances when people who have assumed they were somehow "above the law" only to be shown that they were convicted like everyone else. What are those stories like?

Homework for Next Time:

Please read chapters 7-9 for next time. Consider these questions:

- Does God seem to relent in these chapters?
- What is the purpose of God's judgment?

University Lutheran Presents:



God's Prophet to Israel Chapters 3-6

In chapters 1 and 2 we learned about the surprising introduction that Amos gives his prophecy to the nation of Israel. In chapters 3 through 6, we learn further about God's judgment on Israel. Chapters 3 through 6 show the charges leveled against the nation of Israel and its inhabitants.

In the Lutheran understanding of Law and Gospel, the Law of God is never a bad thing. Indeed, the Law is something that we should regard as good, pure and holy. Yet we do recognize that the Law does seem burdensome to us, especially when we do not keep it ourselves. It is not that the Law in itself is bad, but rather that we do not like to have to think of ourselves as breaking that law.

In Chapters 3 through 6 of Amos, Amos categorically accuses Israel of its sins against God's law.



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Please don't throw this away. Take it home and use it devotionally or leave it for others to use.

Your homework:

You were supposed to read Chapters 1-6. What kinds of things did you find that were “law” (God showing His plan and how humans fail to live up to it)? What kinds of things did you find that were Gospel (the Good News that God rescues His people)?

Israel's Special Relationship with God (3:1-8)

In the first part of Chapter 3, Israel's special relationship with God is shown. God tells Israel to remember that only Israel has shared such a relationship with God. He has only brought them out of Egypt, He has only given them the gift of prophets who tell them to turn from their wicked ways.

The Law of God is given in its complete form only to God's people. We know the Law of God, but sometimes we don't want to. St. Paul expresses that he did not even know sin until he read the Law. Why is having the Law a good thing?

The Totality of Destruction (3:9-11)

In this section, Amos calls upon the traditional enemies for Israel to come and witness how bad things will really get for the nation. It is as if Amos and God are calling out to the Philistines (Ashdod) and Egypt saying, “you think you beat them badly before, watch this...”

We rarely think of God being our enemy. It is not comfortable to think of Him hurting us, and in fact, He doesn't hurt Israel Himself but allows Israel to be overrun. In Luther's Small Catechism, he declares that the Christian should “fear and love God so that...” This sense of fear can be understood as the terrifying sort of fear, or a sense of reverence. Is there something to the idea of “fearing God” here?

The Small Rescue (3:12-15)

Throughout the Old Testament, beginning even as early as the story of Noah, God always reserves for Himself a small group that is called “the remnant” in many Old Testament prophecies. This remnant is often small, but holds both the lessons of the past judgment and the hope of a new future. Here Amos likens the remnant to two legs of a sheep or an ear that were pulled from a lion's mouth. Most of animal has been destroyed, but this fragment has been left. *Even if it is just a remnant left, what does a remnant have to say about God's grace even in the midst of the effects of the Law around us?*

The Hypocrisies of Israel (4:1-5)

Israel is declared hypocritical early in chapter 4 by God both with the physical blessings God has given them and with the spiritual blessings God has

lavished upon them. They are called “cows of Bashan” that eat up everything and then God mocks the way that they come to His altars seemingly in order to sin, not to repent.

Could Christians today be called out as hypocrites today? Do Christian churches ever act hypocritically?

Yet You Did Not Return to Me (4:6-13)

In this section, Israel is lamented over by God. It is as if He calls them out on every warning that He gave them. Interestingly, these are the same warnings that show up in the covenant between God in Israel in Deuteronomy 28.

Sometimes we can see God's Law acting as a warning to us to stop certain behaviors. If we are blind to the Law, often we look back and see God trying to have warned us all along. How does God's Law act as a “warning” to us?

Chiasm – Amos is famous for this (5:1-17, 18-27)

One of the things that Amos is “famous” for is that he is a well put-together poet. Hebrew poetry functions in some ways that are very much like our traditional English/Western conception of poetry, and in some ways that are very different. One of the Hebrew poetic forms that seems to have a place in both the Eastern and Western forms is the use of “chiasm”. A “chiasm” is like mirror image poetry form with the most impacting statement in the middle.

In the first part of Amos chapter 5, this chiasm structure appears this way:

1. Description of certain judgment (1-3)
2. Call for individual repentance (4-6)
3. Accusation of legal injustice (7)
4. Portrayal of God's rightful place (8-9)
5. Accusation of legal injustice (10-13)
6. Call for individual repentance (14-15)
7. Description of certain judgment (16-17)

There is another chiasm in 5:18-27.

If God's rightful place as judge is the major aspect of this section of poetry, what do you think that says about God's place as judge in our lives today?

(go to the next page)