Cows Of Bashan

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday February 19th, 2023

Text: Amos 4

### Intro

1. Israel, the Northern Kingdom (Northern 10 Tribes), experienced great peace and prosperity under the reign of Jeroboam II, the son of King Joash of Israel.
2. The prophets Jonah, Hosea & Amos were contemporary during this time (II Kings 14:25; Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1)
3. God called a shepherd named Amos from Tekoa in Judah and sent him to Israel to prophesy because Israel didn’t use the peace and prosperity from God as a time to repent: God’s message throughout Amos is “You have not returned to Me.”
4. In contrast, Assyria, Israel’s enemy and pagan country, repented from the peasant to the King when Jonah preached to them (Jonah 3:1-10). This helped bring peace to Israel.
5. For their sins, God pronounced judgement on Israel through Hosea and Amos (Hosea 4:6-7; Amos 7:7-17; 9:8-10) and other prophets (II Kings 17:6-23)
6. The book of Amos has many parallels to the world we live in today.
7. God has promised destruction to the world and an eternal punishment to the wicked!

#### Cows of Bashan

* 1. Amos 4:1-3: Ungodly women, called “cows of Bashan.”
     1. Bashan was east of Jordan and good pastureland.
     2. These were the wives of the rich and powerful.
     3. Amos 4:1: They were selfish, insensitive, destructive & decadent.
     4. Women will either be great blessing to society, or great curses upon society.
     5. Amos 4:2-3: Amos’ illustration of their punishment: as fish are caught by hooks so these women would be taken captive.
     6. Amos 4:3: “You will go out through breaches in the walls.”
        1. Their hope in the fortified walls of the city would fail.
        2. They would be led captive out of the city through the very holes which let the enemy in!
        3. The city of Samaria would be in ruins.
  2. During this time of peace the people lived decadent & lavish lives
     1. Amos 3:15: When punishment from God strikes, it will demolish the great houses and their beds of ivory.
     2. Amos 6:1-8: Despite all the warnings, from the prophets, of doom and destruction because of their idolatry, the Israelites were “at ease” and lounged on their “beds of ivory” and were not “grieved over the ruin of Joseph.”
     3. God says their destruction is near.
     4. Assyria has repented for now and God is giving them time to repent but within 50-70 years Assyria will rise up against them and carry them away into exile (II Kings 17).
  3. The world we live in today:
     1. We live in relative peace to worship God as He wills.
     2. God has warned through His word that the world will be burned up (II Peter 3:7, 10) and the wicked will be eternally punished (Matthew 25:41-46).
     3. God has warned saints, disciples of Jesus, to be alert and look forward to that day in holy and godly conduct (II Peter 3:10-12).
     4. Yet, the majority of the world rejects God’s words and continues on day-to-day business as usual (I Thessalonians 5:2-3: “Peace and safety!” then destruction!)
     5. Jesus said this was the case in the days of Noah before the flood and in the days of Lot before Sodom & Gomorrah were destroyed (Luke 17:26-32).
     6. Many people around us live according to their desires with no fear or grief over the promised destruction and punishment to come!
  4. The apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time (NKJ: “redeeming”), because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15-16).
  5. God gives us time to repent (II Peter 3:9): What do you do with the time?

#### False Worship Won’t Save

* 1. Amos 4:4-5: False worship won’t save the Israelites.
     1. Bethel and Gilgal were centers of idolatry.
        1. Genesis 35:15; Joshua 4:20-24: They were once where God’s help was commemorated.
     2. Amos 4:4-5: The people *loved* false worship.
        1. They were very diligent; some may even say they were religious.
        2. They sacrificed every morning.
        3. They tithed every three days.
     3. The problem of false worship:
        1. Not authorized by God (offered up that which was leavened.)
        2. Not offered to God (False gods: golden calves – Hos. 8:5; 10:5)
        3. Sacrifices offered in sin are rejected (Amos 5:21-23)
     4. Those engaged in false worship don’t want to hear the truth!
        1. Amos 7:10-13: Amaziah, the priest at Bethel, sent word to the king accusing Amos of prophesying death to the king and exile to the nation.
        2. Bethel was one of the centers of worship to the golden calves King Jeroboam the son of Nebat set up (I Kings 12:28-30).
        3. King Abijah of Judah once accused King Jeroboam of running the Levites out of the land and selling the priesthood to whoever could pay for it from among all the other tribes (II Chronicles 13:9). So it is likely this Amaziah isn’t a Levite.
        4. Notice what he said: “…the land is unable to endure all his words,” “Go, you seer, flee away to the land of Judah and there eat bread and there do your prophesying!” “…no longer prophesy at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence.”
        5. Where the word of God was needed the most: a false center of worship, the priest said go back home and prophesy.
  2. The world we live in today:
     1. Because of false teachings people think they are saved and don’t need to change (the Israelites who worshiped the golden calves felt the same).
     2. Changing the command to be baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 10:48) to saying a prayer (not found in the Scriptures) won’t save!
     3. People can sin in worship!
        1. Matthew 15:8-9: Worship may be in vain.
        2. Colossians 2:23: Worship may be directed by man’s will.
     4. Many in the world are like Amaziah: Don’t preach here! Go home and preach! Preach quietly for we cannot endure your words.
     5. Like Amos we must not be silent but take the word of God to where it is needed the most: where wickedness and false teachings abound!
  3. Teach the word of God and take it to the people who need to hear it!

#### Return to God!

* 1. Amos 4:6-10: While God was blessing Israel with peace and prosperity, He also sent warnings to them to remind them to repent:
     1. Amos 4:6: Famine:
        1. Lack of rain three months before harvest would prevent full development of the grain.
        2. Mt. 5:45; 6:11: We are dependent on God for our food.
           1. He causes the sun to shine, and sends the rain.
        3. Acts 14:17: The earth, rain, sunshine are the instruments by which God gives us food.
     2. Amos 4:7-8: Drought:
        1. Harvest came the last of April or first of June, so the February and March rains had been withheld.
        2. God had caused it to rain in spots, so the drought was miraculous in nature and a sign from God.
     3. Amos 4:9: The crops suffered:
        1. “Scorching wind”: crops withered.
        2. “Mildew”: a blight, which left the crops yellow and non-productive.
        3. The people suffered from loss of water *(Vss. 7-8)* and food supply.
     4. Amos 4:10: Plague:
        1. *Ex. 7-12:* Plagues against Egypt: God sent similar ones against Israel.
           1. Water & food affected, etc…
        2. They would experience war and suffer loss of life.
        3. So many died that they could not be buried fast enough to avoid the “stench of” the camps.
  2. These weren’t just acts of nature but were direct judgments from God.
  3. Amos 4:11: They were overthrown as Sodom and Gomorrah *(Gen. 19)* 
     1. Exemplified total destruction.
     2. God’s judgment on those cities became a proverb for destruction.
        1. *(Deut. 29:23; Is. 1:9; 13:19; Jer. 49:18; Zeph. 2:9)*
     3. “Like a firebrand snatched from a blaze.”
        1. Only by God’s grace & mercy were they not completely destroyed.
  4. The Reaction of the People
     1. Amos 4:11: “Yet you have not returned to Me.”
     2. God gave them opportunity and they rejected Him time after time.
     3. The people resisted repentance!
  5. The world we live in today:
     1. God’s people are to repent when wrong and seek God’s forgiveness! (I John 1:9)
     2. Hebrews 3:13-15; 4:7: Christians are reminded of the mistakes made by Israel and encouraged not to make the same errors *(Heb. 3:7-11).*
     3. God wants all men to come to know Him and be saved and for all men to repent (I Timothy 2:4; Acts 17:30-31; II Peter 3:9)
     4. Don’t fall for the lies of the world with all its temptations, justifications, and normalizations!
  6. God is patient and eager for man’s repentance! *(II Pet. 3:9)*

## Conclusion

1. God’s efforts were rejected in Israel, a nation no longer resembling God’s people but the world around them, which is what they wanted when they asked for a king (I Samuel 8:5, 19-20).
   1. God’s efforts to discipline the people were fruitless.
      1. Five times God said, “Yet you have not returned to Me!”
      2. They weren’t concerned enough to give up their sinful lives.
2. God’s reaction to their rejection was punishment and destruction
   1. Amos 4:12: They must prepare to meet God in a severe judgment!
      1. Amos 9:8-10: God will destroy the sinful kingdom.
      2. Israel, brought to her knees by the Assyrians (721 BC), would meet the God Who sought their repentance and Who they offended & rejected!
3. Sound familiar? ***God promises the same thing to those who reject His word today.***
   1. John 12:48: Jesus’ word will judge those who rejected it.
   2. Matthew 25:41-46: Eternal punishment awaits those who are disobedient to God.
   3. God’s desire was for Israel’s repentance.
   4. God’s desire today is for all people everywhere to repent. (Acts 17:30; II Pet. 3:9)
4. Who is the God that Israel and the people of the world today refuse to return unto?
   1. Amos 4:13: An Almighty God – the Creator.
   2. Amos 4:13: An all-wise God who both knows and declares man’s thoughts.
      1. The God of such power is easily capable of executing the judgments pronounced upon the people.
      2. Hebrews 4:12-13: He knows our thoughts today.
5. The account of Israel’s rejection and destruction gives us hope and warning:
   1. It’s great news to know God is patient towards us.
   2. The warning is that there is a limit as to how long He will wait!
6. Use the time you are given wisely: Repent and turn to God!
7. If you are not a Christian, you need to be. Repent and be baptized!
8. If a Christian in sin, don’t hesitate to make it right with God!
9. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!