

Let Justice Roll (3): The Day of the Lord

(Amos 5:)

I. Introduction

A. Problem preaching on Amos—few lighthearted moments in an intense book!

1. To lighten things—Top 10 Reasons You Know You’re in Wrong Church

- *Sermon is “Jonah the Shepherd Boy and His Ark of Many Colors”*
- *Everyone agrees the temperature in auditorium is absolutely perfect!*
- *Offering envelopes printed “Make checks payable directly to preacher.”*
- *The ushers demand your wallet, watch, and wedding rings.*
- *You have to tip the usher to get a good seat right up front*
- *The minister falls asleep while delivering his own sermon.*
- *Ushers passing around the offering basket are wearing ski masks.*
- *You're the only person present carrying a Bible, including the preacher.*
- *The Church bus has a gun rack.*
- *There's an ATM machine in the vestibule.*

2. It would seem that a lot of folks are in wrong church... or no church at all

a. *Newsweek* reported on recent *American Religious Identification Survey*

1) Those with no religious affiliation doubled since ‘90 (8% to 15%)

2) Those identifying as “Christian” has fallen 10 pts from 86% to 76%

3) Atheist/agnostic has quadrupled 3.6 million (*2x as many as Episcopal*)

b. Term most often used to describe American culture is “*Post-Christian*”

c. Country no longer has what some call “*a Christian presumption*”

1) Christianity is no longer the dominant religious belief or ideology

2) People don’t all belong to church, read the Bible or believe in Christ

d. There’s a sense in which we have reached the “*End of Christian America*”

B. May not be a bad thing; an article by Greg Boyd got me thinking (*a good thing*)

1. **First**, Neither America nor any country can ever be a “*Christian nation*”

a. Nations of world are ruled by Satan (**Lk 4:5-7**; **2 Cor. 4:4**; **1 Jn. 5:19**).

b. No nation can live by Christian values or principles (*Sermon on Mount*)

c. So to call a nation “Christian” waters down what it means to be Christian!

2. **Second** if church loses political clout, maybe we’ll be less tempted by power

a. Kingdoms of world exercise power, not God’s kingdom (**Matt 20:25-26**)

b. Church loses its essence when wields worldly power (*medieval Catholic*)

3. **Third**, the kingdom of God has always thrived on the fringes of society.
 - a. Bible portrays us as “*strangers*” and “*aliens*” (**1 Peter 2:11**, **Heb 11:13**)
 - b. Church must meet Jesus “*outside the camp*” of its culture (**Heb 13:13**)
 - c. Kierkegaard said, “*If everyone is Christian, then no one is Christian*”
 4. **4th**, Boyd suggests “*Christian nation*” was really a “*Shared Civic Religion*”
 - a. Issues like school prayer, 10 Commands, Nativity scene-- SYMBOLS
 - 1) Symbols made religion seem official— but didn’t make us Christian
 - 2) Symbols can make us think we’re “*Christian nation*” while missing obvious inconsistency (*Decalogue on courthouse* → *Jim Crow law*)
 - b. It is a lot easier to stress religious symbols than to focus on God!
 - c. **Problem:** See enough symbols and you may think you are seeing God
- C. That brings us back to Amos and Israelite nation filled with religious symbols
1. Israel saw themselves as “*the chosen people*” (sort of a “*Christian nation*”)
 - a. They had shrines built to God at Dan and Bethel (where Amos preached)
 - 1) Sure, there weren’t technically the right place to worship (Jerusalem)
 - 2) But they were filled with worship—feasts, festivals, songs, sacrifices
 - b. Israel was rich with religious symbols showing them to be chosen people
 - c. They didn’t just have religious symbols—they had material prosperity
 - 1) Amos was preaching to the most prosperous Jews since Solomon
 - d. They believed God had surely blessed their special nation... **NOT!**
 2. Our text this morning is the most pointed and dramatic of part of Amos
 - a. If you think Amos has been preaching, wait until we look at **Amos 5**
 - b. He will condemn those who believe they are God’s special chosen ones
 - 1) He will tell them that God has no interest in their religious symbols
 - 2) The sacrifices and songs, the feasts and festivals they mean nothing
 - c. God is going to point to the heart of the nation, a heart that is bankrupt
 3. Remember, this Israel believed that she was God’s “*Christian nation*”
 - a. Why? Because of her religious symbols and her material prosperity
 - b. Do you think there might be an application in here somewhere for us?
 4. Amos will make two dramatic (his most dramatic) points in this chapter

II. First Point: *The Day of the Lord*

- A. Amos introduces a recurring theme in the prophets— the Day of the Lord
1. In OT prophets, the Day of the Lord is a time when God brings justice
 - a. In the NT, this theme becomes the final judgment (**2 Peter 3:10**)
 - b. In OT, the Day of the Lord was a judgment in time for nations
 - 1) Isaiah predicts the coming day of the Lord for Babylon (**Isa 13:6,9**)
 - 2) The Jews liked the message of the Day of the Lord in **Obadiah 15**
 2. **Problem:** Israel thought that the “Day of the Lord” was to be a good thing
 - a. “*Day of the Lord*” would be God’s shock-and-awe on Israel’s enemies
 - b. Remember: Amos begins his book by listing the sins of Israel’s neighbors
 3. Amos says that when God comes, He’s coming for Israel! (**Amos 5:18-20**)
 - a. The “Day of the Lord” would be a day of darkness with no light at all
 - b. Isaiah has judgment shake the heavens & rearrange cosmos (**Isa 13:10**)
 4. The point Amos stresses to Israel is that there would be **NO ESCAPE**
 - a. Israel would run from a lion only to meet a bear—and be bit by snake!
 - b. The Day of the Lord would be God’s judgment on His chosen nation.
- B. Of course, there’s no application at all here for Christians today, is there?
1. OK, so maybe Peter does sound just a little like Amos in **1 Peter 4:17-18**
 - a. Peter says that judgment will begin with the church, with you and me
 - 1) Context: Persecution of the church and the suffering that will come
 - 2) Why a reminder of final Day of the Lord? Why we must be faithful
 - b. And when kingdom comes, the Judge is going to start with the church
 - c. **Point:** We’ll make it by the skin of teeth. *Really tough for everyone else!*
 2. **Warning:** Easy for Christians to adopt this weird double standard for sin
 - a. Jesus died to forgive sin; everyone must believe in Jesus to be forgiven
 - 1) Isn’t God going to save everyone? Not according to **2 Thess 1:7-8**
 - 2) We “*get saved*” from adultery-n-idolatry, greed-n-gossip, lying-n-lust
 - b. Once we are saved, we tend to downplay the seriousness of some sin
 - c. Adultery-n-idolatry, greed-n-gossip, lying-n-lust? *Well, nobody’s perfect!*
 3. **Remember:** Judgment begins HERE, so we’d better get our house in order!
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III. Second Point: *Religion Won't Be Enough*

- A. What was it that convinced Israel they were God's special people? **Religion**
1. This was a nation full of religious symbols, tradition and worship
 - a. OK, so Jeroboam had changed the place of worship just a bit
 - b. The traditions, feasts, festivals and sacrifices were all the same.
 2. Amos condemns Israel's faith in the symbols of religion (**Amos 5:21-24**)
 - a. Israel tried to in essence buy off God with the rigor of its religion
 - 1) They were careful to do all the feasts-n-fasts, the sacrifice-n-songs
 - 2) If you toured Israel, the proof of its religious heritage was obvious
 - b. And God says, "*Not only am I not impressed; I hate everything about it!*"
 3. Israel failed to give God one thing He demands in worship. **Themselves**
 - a. They thought essence of religion was the **rite stuff**, their ritual/worship
 - b. They seemed to think God was dazzled with pomp and circumstance
 - c. Worship as slight of hand; give worship & he won't notice how we live
 4. What God wants is justice & righteousness, *His own nature reflected back!*
- B. When I was at FHC, **Amos 6:5** was favorite proof text on *a cappella* worship
1. You need a KJV here, "*invent to themselves instruments of music like David*"
 - a. One teacher got into a bit of trouble for suggesting this wasn't point
 - b. Well, it's not the point—notice the rest of context here (**Amos 6:4-7**)
 - c. Point isn't about their worship; the point is about their hearts-n-lives
 2. Do we also believe that God can be bought off with religion and symbols?
 - a. Do we think that God is intensely interested in our theology or worship?
 - b. Do we act like we think righteousness is OK, but doctrine is the point?
 - c. Do we think social, economic and racial justice is unrelated to our faith
 - d. Do we think being Christian is mostly about church? (*Sitting in henhouse*)
 - e. Do we think being the true church is solely about theological correctness
 - f. Do we think having wrong heart is offset by being right on baptism
 3. If you are comfortable answering "yes" to those questions, you are going to be very uncomfortable hearing Amos... or standing before Amos' God!
- C. Good News: Those who have hearts that aren't right with God CAN CHANGE