

Amos: The Shepherd Prophet (Part 6)

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[0:00] Well, here we are in Amos, and we're going to be getting into chapter 5 tonight.

! So I think we're moving along pretty well. We're in that section, not to belabor this, but just to keep our minds correct, and where we are in the book, we're in that part of the book where Amos is speaking.

He's speaking. It's what he's saying. Actually, it's God speaking through him. And that is what we have in chapters 1 through 6. So we're getting pretty close to the end of that portion of the two parts of the book of Amos.

Chapter 5 is a call to repentance. Repentance. And so I guess we could say, even though they did not repent, I would even go a step further and say, even though God knew they would not, at least from Amos' perspective, and I think it's a correct one, there's always kind of the holding out of that possibility.

And so even though God knows they will not repent, God still demands that they would repent. And so it's important to see that. So that's what we're going to see here in chapter 5, that we're not going to get through all of that chapter here tonight.

[1:43] Chapter in, let me just say this, I guess we could further divide this first of the two-part portion of the book. We could divide it further this way.

Chapters 1 through 4 comprise really kind of a unit in the book of Amos, and some have called it the book of doom. And if you didn't pick up on that as we were studying those passages, then you weren't listening, because it's kind of doom and gloom, isn't it?

In fact, you might even say the entire book is that. But chapters 5 through 6 comprise also a unit within this section, some have called it the book of woes. And that's what we're getting into now. We're going to just barely get into the first of two woes, and we'll talk about that more. As I said a moment ago, the prophet Amos still has hope that repentance might avert the final catastrophe for Israel.

And so the message is to repent. Now, let me go ahead and read, even though we're going to be looking at various verses.

[3:00] In fact, I'm going to go verse by verse through this section. Heck, since I am, I think I'll just wait. Because we're going to take this verse by verse, verses 1 through 17. But what I want to do before we look at it verse by verse is share with you how this is constructed by the author.

Now, you've heard me say this before when studying certain passages. It's a very common thing in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament as well.

And it's what this literary device that's known as a chiasm or chiasmus is really the better word. Chiasm or chiasmus.

And do you ever remember me saying that or mentioning that? It's really not complicated or even hard to see. The word chiasm or chiasmus comes from the Greek letter chi.

And it looks like an X, doesn't it? And I guess that really is what it is. The capital letter of chi would look like an X.

[4:12] And so this particular device that was used quite often by Bible writers and outside the Bible in this time period follows this kind of pattern.

And it's a... Maybe I could just give you an example of chiasmus with this sentence.

Don't... Maybe I shouldn't use this. Don't live to eat, but eat to live. That's a chiasmus where the first thing said is paralleled by the last word.

The second word is paralleled by the second to the last word. And when it comes together, you have a truth. You have a truism or a good word.

Now that's a very simplified chiasmus where there's really not a central sentence or word used. You just have parallel thoughts leading you to the middle.

[5 : 19] And that's the idea of chiasmus. All of the various points come to the middle and the Bible writers would always include a one statement or several verses sometimes that don't have a parallel because the idea is to bring everything, bring the reader to that central, most important thing that the writer wants you to get.

And hence then kind of the pattern. And in this case, by the way, when we get to the middle, it's going to be a hymn.

It's written in the form of a hymn. It's poetic. And so everything's going to lead us to the middle. So I want us to, if you've got a Bible with you because you don't have this in your notes, we're just going to take this verse by verse.

I started to, you know, to print out the verses but I thought, you know, you've got a Bible, right? I hope so. And if you don't, I've just embarrassed you.

You can look off your neighbor if you don't. But, so I didn't put this in your notes and we'll just take this verse by verse and walk through this chiasmus. You've got it in your notes even though you're going to fill in some blanks.

[6 : 38] The first thing in the verse, of course, would be the first three verses of this section of chapter 5 which runs 1 through 17.

First one would be lamentation. There's a lamentation. What is a lamentation? It's a mourning. In this case, it's a mourning for the death of Israel or the death of the nation Israel.

And so he begins with lamentation. Let's just look at verse 1. Hear this word which I take up against you. A lamentation, O house of Israel.

Lamentation. There's the word. It means to mourn a very sad occasion. And it is a sad occasion. The nation Israel is going to be conquered and led away.

The remnant are going to be led away captive and it will mark the end of the northern kingdom, the nation of Israel. So it's a lamentation. The virgin, he goes on in verse 2, the virgin of Israel has fallen.

[7 : 47] Some question about what is meant there. It's actually, most scholars agree, actually, kind of a statement of love, an expression of love.

in the sense of my, you know, my special, chaste one. Virgin Israel has fallen.

So it's kind of an expression of love for Israel. And so it adds force to the mourning. I guess the depth of this mourning and lamentation over Israel.

my precious one, my virgin Israel has fallen and she will rise no more. She lies forsaken on her land.

There is no one to raise her up. See? No one to deliver her. No possibility of deliverance. No one's going to deliver her. They cannot deliver themselves. No one from outside is going to deliver them.

[8 : 52] You know, no false religion, false idol, false idols they were worshipping. One of the reasons why God is judging them.

Those false idols are not going to be able to do anything. But thus says the Lord God, verse 3, the city that goes out by a thousand shall have a hundred left.

And that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel. What He's talking about here is your armies are going to go out by hundreds.

And when they go out, only a few of them will make it back alive. And the idea being, we're talking here about military defeat. You're going to try to deliver yourself, but it won't work.

You'll be defeated. And so this is lamentation. Oh, virgin, my virgin Israel, my beloved one, my precious one, you've fallen.

[9 : 51] And no one's going to raise you up. So here's the lamentation. Now, I said that the chiasmus always has the parallel.

The first one would have a parallel on the end of the passage and we see that in verse 16. So let's go, let's skip to verse 16. Therefore, the Lord God of hosts, the Lord says this, there shall be wailing in all streets.

So here's again, language about lamentation. Crying, weeping, mourning, wailing is the word that's used here. And as you kind of read on through, you're going to see that this morning, there will be no place in all of Israel where people will not be crying and weeping and mourning, where there will not be lamentation.

No, I mean, this is widespread. It encompasses the entire nation. And that's why He goes on to say there shall be wailing in all streets and they shall say in all the highways.

Actually, the word refers to the public places, public squares. Alas, alas, they shall call the farmer to mourning and skillful lamenters to wailing.

[11:14] be the professional mourners, you know, that's what they have, part of their culture, people actually get paid to mourn. And so in Him saying, even the poor farmers as well as the professional mourners, God being, everyone is going to be mourning.

In all vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through you, says the Lord. Pass through means I'm going to pass through in judgment. And then when it ends, when He ends by saying says the Lord, then that's a strong statement that the judgment is coming from me.

I'm going to be judging. And in this case it took the form of a military invasion and a military conqueror, another nation conquering them, and even though it was a pagan, wicked nation that conquered them, God says, I'm the one who caused it.

And so He's lamenting. This is lamentation. So that's the beginning of the pattern that Amos uses. The second part of the chiasmus exhortation.

There's an exhortation. So He's lamenting over them and now He's saying this is what you must do. This is what I demand that you do. And the exhortation is to repent. To repent.

[12:39] And it begins there in verse 4. For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel, Seek me and live. That means turn to me.

The idea being repent, repent, and what? Live. But do not seek Bethel, nor enter Gilgal, nor pass over Beersheba.

Now what is He talking about there? Well these were key places of pagan religion, false religion, where they actually had temples. They were set up to worship idols.

And the idea being don't turn to false gods. Don't go to the temples in Bethel, or Gilgal, or Beersheba.

And then He says why. He tells them why. For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nothing. If you think you can escape the judgment by consulting and worshipping these false gods, they can't even save themselves.

[13:49] You think they can save you? And so it's a strong statement to turn to me. I'm your only hope, is what of course He's saying.

In verse 6, Seek the Lord and live, lest He break out like fire. fire. And that's just another symbol of a military attack.

It will come upon them like fire and burn their cities. But I will. He says, lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph.

Joseph, you remember, had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. and those two tribes resided in the northern kingdom.

And so it's just a statement about the sons of Joseph. It's just a statement about the northern kingdom. So, break out like fire through a military attack and devour it with no one to quench it in Bethel.

[14:50] There will be no stopping this. So, you have lamentation, then exhortation, then you have the parallel on the other end of the exhortation, starting in verse 14.

Seek good and not evil, that you may live. Now, here it is again, the idea is repentance. Turn not only to me, but turn to what is good, which is synonymous with God.

And really, in regard to repentance, these verses, verses 14 and 15, are going to focus more on the fruit of repentance. What repentance should look like, not only what you do, but who you are, it says, seek good and not evil, that you may live.

So, the Lord, God of hosts, will be with you. That's a fruit of repentance, or a promise of repentance. You live, that's a fruit of repentance.

God will be with you, that's the result, the fruit of repentance, as you have spoken. That's kind of a snide, I think, a snide way of saying, you've said I was with you.

[16:03] You've been telling everybody that the one true God is with us, and yet I haven't been. But if you'll seek me, turn to me. Then you'll not only live, but I will be with you, just like you said I was.

Hate evil, love good, establish justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

I think this is an indication that there isn't anything, nothing's going to stop the judgment of Israel to the point of extinction as a nation. But there will be a remnant.

And so this is a further word to a remnant of those who remain faithful. And He's saying to them, even through all of what's going to happen, continue to seek me, and I will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Alright, and then, so you have exhortation. You begin with lamentation on each end of the construction. Exhortation, the parallel on the end of that, and then comes accusation.

[17 : 20] An accusation of sin, of wickedness. Verse 7, you who turn justice to wormwood. You know, you see wormwood quite often in the Old Testament, Old Testament literature.

Wormwood was a plant, and they say that the stalk of this plant was very, very bitter, extremely bitter, and so it's a statement about the kind of justice they were dishing out to people.

It was bitter, a bitter kind of justice. Speaking to it actually being injustice, this is their sin. You turn justice to wormwood, and you lay, and this is probably even more vivid symbolism here, you lay righteousness to rest in the earth.

That's a kind of a literal translation. We could say, you know, they cast it down to the ground.

Justice just did not exist anywhere in Israel.

Those who were in charge, leaders, judges, they were corrupt, and they were actually exercising injustice when it came to the common people, and the people were suffering.

[18 : 36] So it's like they had turned their judgments into something that was always bitter to the people. people. And when it came to true justice, they just cast that out on the ground, meaning they didn't have any justice.

Alright, so we have accusation of sin, and the parallel comes in verse 10. And so it says, they hate the one who rebukes in the gate.

The gate was the location for business to be taken care of, government business, judging would be done there, disputes would be settled there, in the gate, around the gate, and that's what they called that area.

And so when he says they hate the one who rebukes in the gate, talking about those judges that still existed in Israel who were honest and just, and were handing down just judgments, but Israel hated them.

you know, the rest of the judges were corrupt and they had a few good ones in there, and what did they get for their troubles? They were hated by Israel.

[19 : 50] And then they abhor, which is really another way of saying hate, the one who speaks uprightly. And I think the image here is of prophets.

There are still true prophets in Israel, speaking the truth. And what did they do to them? They hated them. So they hated judges, government leaders who were just, and they hated their preachers who were speaking the truth.

Sounds kind of familiar, doesn't it? Therefore, it says in verse 11, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from them, meaning, you know, you're just unfair with them, and charging excess in rent probably is the idea, their unfair rent, and take grain taxes from them, though you have built houses of hewn stone.

All right, so you're oppressing the poor, putting unfair taxes and unfair rent upon them while you build luxurious homes, lavish homes, yet you shall not dwell in them.

You'll build these beautiful homes, but you're not going to live there, not going to be able to live there. You have planted pleasant vineyards, so you have profitable crops, big crops, big farms, big homes, and so forth, but you shall not drink wine from them.

[21 : 24] You're not going to reap any benefit from them, because why? Because all these things are going to be destroyed. They're going to be taken. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins afflicting the just and taking bribes, again, corruption, diverting the poor from justice at the gate, not even allow the poor people to come and get justice at the gate, diverting them.

And therefore, verse 13, the prudent keep silent at that time, for it is an evil time. That's kind of an interesting thing, the prudent.

See, throughout these verses, there is reference to some who have not turned away from God. A little later, he's going to talk about the remnant.

In fact, we've already looked at that passage about the remnant. A moment ago, it talked about judges who were still just and prophets who were still preaching the truth. And here, there are those who are living prudent, prudent lives.

That is, the idea being they were still following the one true God and obeying His laws and so forth. And yet, when the judgment comes, they're going to keep silent.

[22:40] They're going to keep silent at that time, for it is an evil time. That is, the idea is they understand that this is the judgment of God. And because they are followers of the one true God, and they trust Him, then they know that judgment is righteous, that it's right.

And so, in a sense, they are approving of what is happening to the nation, even though they're right in the midst of it. That's a little difficult to see that, to see that actually happening, but to the point, to the very brink of the judgment that's going to fall, those who are still, the remnant are still, those who are the followers of the one true God, they're going to look at the judgment as righteous, and so they're not going to speak out against it, speak out against God.

Alright, so the accusation, that brings us to the middle, and the middle is a hymn, and this is what the author is wanting us to get. See, he's moving the reader.

Now, it doesn't move us in this way because we don't, you know, we're not used to these kinds of constructions in literature.

We don't even see them, but the readers of this day, and even well into the New Testament age, early New Testament age, the readers, especially Hebrews, Hebrew readers, Jewish readers, they were used to seeing this in literature, and so they understood that this was a certain kind of construction that the author was wanting to bring them ultimately to the most important point.

[24:25] And what's the most important point here? Well, it's given in a hymn in that form. It's poetic, and even though we can't really recognize that necessarily in our English translation.

And the main point is the nature of God, the nature of Israel's God, and so let me just walk through that. Verse 8, He made the Pleiades, however you want to pronounce that, and Orion, what are those?

Stars, constellations actually, constellation of stars, and so what is He saying? He made those.

These would have been two very prominent constellations, would have been well known by people in this day, already been named, and they're quite large, and God is saying, I made, I made those things.

And He turns the shadow of death into morning and makes the day dark as night. That's a little difficult to work through, but the basic idea is that God is in charge of the rotation of the earth.

And not only the rotation of this earth, but its rotation around the sun, and again, a statement to the might and sovereignty of God.

[25:45] He put all the stars out there. See, these two that He mentioned, these constellations He mentioned are just representative of all the stars, and in our understanding, because we have an even more understanding of the vastness of our universe, the idea is that God put all that out there.

He created the entire universe, all of its stars, all of its planets, all of its solar systems and galaxies and all those things, and bringing it closer to this planet that morning comes and night comes and the rotation of this planet, God is in charge of that.

He's in control of that. We think that it's just natural, and it certainly is in perfect order, but we think that it's just a natural way of things, but God is saying I control that.

Every time this earth rotates, I'm the one who is in control of that. There were a couple of occasions when God caused it to stand still for very short periods of time.

And so that is another indication that God can stop the rotation of the planet any time He wants. He can make it go faster if He wants to. He's in control of all of these things.

[27:03] He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth. water. And you know, that, I mean, what is that?

That's a statement of the cycle of moisture. I'm trying to think of the term for that. some of you remember? Huh?

The water cycle. Yeah, the water cycle. It's hydro something, hydro something. Hydrological. And water comes out of the ocean and rains down upon the earth.

And we, again, we have the idea that this just works like clockwork. Of course, here in Oklahoma, it doesn't really work like clockwork all the time, not according to our clock. But, you know, God's in charge of that.

He's in control of that. And that's a pretty awesome statement. And really you can take that out a little further and say that when famines come, God's in control of that too.

[28 : 03] And when floods take place, God is in control of that. Now, let's just go a little further. The Lord is His name. He rains ruin upon the strong so that fury comes down upon the fortress.

And that's a statement that God is in control of the affairs of man and the affairs of nations and conquering nations, like the one that's about to conquer Israel, will eventually conquer Israel. God's in control of all of that. And so why would the writer Amos, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, place this at dead center in this particular literary construction called the chiasmus, why would he want that to be the main point?

Well, it's obvious really that everything that is said about what God is going to do brings us to the reality that God is well able to do all He says He's going to do.

And you could make other connections. If He calls upon us to repent, seek Him and repent, then we had better do that.

[29 : 23] Because God is absolutely sovereign and holy and it gives us every reason to trust Him and believe His word. Not only His word about judgment, but also His word about promises and His word about His instructions for us and how we are to live and how we relate to one another and all these things.

Israel had forgotten all about this God. I mean, here they are, you know, now worshiping idols and false gods and involved in false religions and blasphemous sacrificial sacrifices and so forth.

And doing all this in a form of worship to gods made out of stone and wood. But the one true God made all the stars and planets and He's in control of the planet and its rotation and the rain that comes and waters your crops, God's in charge of that.

You see what a strong statement this is to the people of Israel. And the right response is to repent, seek Him, and live, because there's no life in anyone else.

Alright, so that's a chiasmus and of those first 17 verses in chapter 5. Got a little more time here so I think I'll go a little step further.

[30 : 46] Verses 18 through 27 comprise the first of two woes or two woe oracles. Woe oracle, an oracle is a communication from God and it's addressed, this woe, these woes, are addressed to those, the Bible says in verse 18, who desire the day of the Lord.

And this is really very interesting, very significant part of the passage. He's talking to Israel, of course, and this is a prophecy to Israel.

And he's saying, he's saying, I'm addressing a woe to you, those of you who desire the day of the Lord. Now, the question is, what is the day of the Lord?

And not just what is it theologically, we could talk a lot about that, but what did they believe it was, is the issue here because the readers, Amos' readers, people of Israel, they understood this concept. I mean, they knew that the day of the Lord was a theophany when God is going to move in and reveal himself and act and do things, but they really misunderstood entirely about this particular day of the Lord that Amos was talking about here.

[32 : 17] They understood it to be a day of God's special presence, a day of prosperity, they understood the day of the Lord as a day of salvation, but the day of the Lord, when God reveals himself to Israel, it's going to be a day of sheer panic, panic and judgment for Israel.

In fact, there is an allusion to this day or a statement about it already back in chapter 2 and verse 16, and we studied this some time back, the most courageous men of might.

When the judgment does come, when that day comes, the most courageous men of might shall flee naked in that day. They're going to drop their swords and their weapons and they're going to flee for their lives, says the Lord on that day.

That's the day of the Lord in chapter 2 verse 16. Alright, so the day of the Lord is a pretty key statement here.

Now the question for Israel, the question for Israel to wake up and consider is this, why are you looking forward to the day of the Lord?

[33 : 34] Because they were. That's why he's saying those of you who desire the day of the Lord, and the question is why are you? If this is what the day of the Lord is going to bring, total destruction, why are you looking for that day of the Lord?

It's not going to be a bright day, but rather a dark, dark day, a very dark day. That's what he says in verse 20, is not the day of the Lord darkness and not light?

Is it not very dark with no brightness in it? You'll have trouble with the notes. I see several. Sometimes I make mistakes in the notes and they don't line up. Did everything line up okay? Okay. Alright, so it's not going to be a bright day, it's going to be a dark day, and there will be no escape from this day. No escape whatsoever. He says in verse 19, it will be as though a man fled from a lion and a bear met him. It's like your worst nightmare. It's really very true to life, isn't it? [34 : 47] Or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. You can kind of catch the feeling of that. Have you ever had days like that? Well, what next? You know, what was the expression sometimes we used, out of the pan into the fire, and that's the way it's going to be. There'll be no way to get away from it. You can't even go into the shelter of your own home, because there's a snake in there. There's no place to escape. You know, what is supposed to be the application of that? Because people today are desiring the day of the Lord, aren't they? That is, when whatever concept they hold to of the return of the Lord, Lord, and I hear people talk about that, and some understand what that day means, and some do not. [35 : 57] And, because those who are looking forward to the Lord's return, you know, when the lion will lie down with the lamb, and when there's no more crying, and no more tears, no more death, all tears will be wiped away, and when there's no darkness that day, and there are a lot of people who know those verses and know those things and are looking forward, they say, and desiring that day, but there are many of them that need to identify correctly their relationship with God before that day comes. Because the day of the Lord is not just simply His coming with blessing for His people, but it is also a coming in judgment. And that phrase, day of the Lord, is just as often, maybe more often in the Old Testament, used to refer to God's judgment than it is used to refer to His blessing, or the day when He's going to set all things right and gather His own unto Himself. What most people in this nation need to realize is the day of the Lord. If something doesn't change in their spiritual relationship with God through repentance and faith, then that day of the Lord is going to be a real eye opener for them. And it will be a day of judgment. And it was for Israel quite a day of judgment.