

Sunday School Lesson Bible Thoughts For Today

APRIL 27—AMOS AND HOSEA PLEAD FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Scripture Lesson—The books of Amos and Hosea (Amos 6: 1-6; Hosea 6: 1-6 printed.) Golden Text—I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings—Hos. 6: 6. Devotional Reading—Gen. 1: 1-8.

THE TEXT EXPLAINED

Light from the Commentaries Amos 6: 1, 6.

1. At ease in Zion—A spirit of untroubled confidence pervailed in both Zion and Samaria, among the rich and the powerful. No consciousness of shortcomings or offences caused any alarm for the future. Amos here shows that, while his message is primarily to the Northern Kingdom, the South is not regarded as blameless and therefore destined to escape punishment.

2. Gaineh Hamath Gath—Gaineh is not yet definitely identified; hence nothing is known of the event to which Amos here refers. Hamath the great was the capital of Hamath, a state in northern Syria, situated on the Orontes. It was repeatedly engaged in hostilities with Assyria, to which it was almost continuously a vassal. The prophet evidently has in mind some recent disaster that has left Hamath prostrate. Gath was the nearest one of the five chief Philistine cities to the border of Israel. According to 2 Chron. 26: 6, it was destroyed by Uzziah of Judah about 760 B. C.—Bibel for Home and Bible for Home and School.

5, 6. Idle songs—Wine in bowls—The affliction of Joseph—Sing idle songs, better, improve silly songs, a caustic characterization of their efforts in music. Devise for themselves instruments of music, like David—Not satisfied with existing means of musical expression, they invent new ones. While the masses toil and suffer, these indifferent rich waste time upon foolish trifles. This is one of the earliest statements testifying to the belief that David was possessed of great musical skill. Wine in bowls—The use of wine is forbidden by Mohammed and has always been placed under the ban by the Bedouin. To Amos, the champion of the poor and exponent of the simple life, such reckless indulgence was criminal. But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph—Occupied fully with their revelry and debauch, they have no time nor inclination to realize the stricken state of their country, the destruction of which is inevitable.—Powis Smith, Hos. 6: 1-6.

4. Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?—Truly the sinfulness of Israel is endless. Every effort to redeem them only discovers more of it. When I would turn, when I would heal Israel, then the guilt of Ephraim displays itself and the evils of Samaria, these namely: that they work fraud, and the thief cometh in—evidently a technical term of housebreaking—while abroad a crew of highwaymen foray. And they never think in their hearts that all their evil is recorded by Me.—George Adam Smith.

6. Knowledge of God—Hosea here makes "knowledge of God" coordinate with "goodness." Surely knowledge of God's laws is necessary to the following of those laws

APRIL 27 PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid.—John 14:27.

APRIL 28 OH THAT MEN would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.—Psalm 107:21.

APRIL 29 A MAN THAT HATH FRIENDS must shew himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.—Proverbs 18:24.

APRIL 30 THOU ART A GOD READY TO PARDON, GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL, SLOW TO ANGER, AND OF GREAT KINDNESS.—Nehemiah 9:17.

MAY 1 THEY THAT WAIT upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.—Isaiah 40:31.

MAY 2 REMEMBER NOW thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.—Ecc. 12:1, 13.

MAY 3 THUS SAITH THE LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel. Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.—Isaiah 43:1.

We cannot afford to be unintelligent concerning the revelations, which he has given us through those who have lived near enough to the Creator to understand his messages. The acquisition of goodness is a growth needing study and thought.

LESSON THEMES

The Stern Message of Amos. Both in manner and message Amos resembles John the Baptist. He may be called the John the Baptist of the Old Testament. Amos came from Teoa, a small village twelve miles south of Jerusalem and twenty-two miles from Bethel. He was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, the fruit of which was ground for flour from which a coarse bread was made. His mode of life suggests a man inured to hardship, and a keen observer, quick to detect a wrong and ready to denounce it. The crimes which he denounced were immorality, bribery, oppression of the poor, such as the selling of a needy fellow Hebrew into slavery because he was unable to pay a small debt, and taking advantage of the poor in the public tribunal. Amos noted the contrast between the elaborate offerings brought by the people and their disregard of the law of justice and mercy, and told them that God judges by acts, not by creeds or ceremonies. His positive message to his own people and all others was, "Seek God and live."

"What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly before thy God?"

The Persuasive Rebuke of Hosea. In the message of Hosea we have another quality which is not so distinctly marked in the message of Amos. It is a persuasiveness occasioned by the distressing domestic experience of Hosea's life. The heartbreak occasioned by the wayward course of his beautiful wife, Gomer, gave to his stern, strong words of reproof a certain persuasive tenderness. Thus Amos thinks of Jehovah as the king of Israel and her judge; Hosea, as her husband and her father. Hosea rebukes the faults and sins of Israel, but he emphasizes the truth that love is the highest attribute of God. So that a man should love God and for love of him keep all his commandments because God first loved him; which easily leads to the conclusion that a man ought, in like manner to love his fellow men. The duty of brotherly love is not an inference from the fact that Israel had been first loved by God; it is rather a condition of the individual Israelite's participation in that love. Whether parable or fact the story of Gomer expresses the spirit of forgiveness

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