

Let Justice Roll!

Amos 5:18-27

Open Your Heart: “Our Father, we come to You seeking cleansing from every sin seen by Your holy eyes. Instill in us a desire to love justice and righteousness as You do.” (Amos 5:24)

Many Israelites in Amos’ day were looking forward to a coming “day of the LORD.” They apparently understood it as the time when Yahweh would act on their behalf to conquer their enemies and establish Israel as His people forever—regardless of their relationship to Him. In Amos 5:18-27 we see that what Israel will receive from God’s hand will be vastly different from what they anticipated.

Before we read the passage let’s look at the definition and the meaning of the “day of the LORD.”

A Closer Look

The expression the “day of the LORD” was used by the prophets to describe *any* period of time in which God intervenes decisively to *judge* or to *save*. It could be a time of devastating destruction or of overwhelming blessing. In some cases, wrath and blessing can occur simultaneously. This will be especially true “in the day” of God’s ultimate triumph over evil (2 Peter 3:10-13). *The predominant feature of these divine interventions is the overwhelming presence of the Almighty! It is as though God not only comes on the scene—but His presence totally dominates the scene. Human existence pales before this breathtaking reality of God Almighty!* The phrases, “in that day,” or “on that day” are equivalent to the “day of the LORD.”

With this background in mind **read** Amos 5:18-27. Then **review** verses 18-20.

1. What connection do you see between verses 18-20 and 21-27?

Note: In Amos 5:18 we find the first use of the word “woe” in the book, a term used by God to make predictions of imminent doom. No Israelite could miss the significance of the use of this word.

Amos illustrated the error of the popular concept of the day of the LORD through two riveting metaphors (Amos 5:19).

2. What is the meaning of these powerful images and what would it feel like to suddenly find yourself in these circumstances?

3. The imagery of “darkness and light” is also a part of the total picture in verses 18 and 20. What point is Amos seeking to make about the day of the LORD through this imagery?

Without question the day of the LORD is a day of God’s vindication! In the battle between good and evil it is God who will triumph and will be vindicated. Peter’s question in 2 Peter 3:11 is rhetorical and direct: *In view of the coming day of the LORD “what kind of people ought you to be?”*

4. Stop and take a few minutes to reflect on Peter’s searching question. Write a prayer inviting God to work in your heart until every facet of your life becomes a reflection of His righteousness and justice.

The shock felt by the people when Amos so vehemently attacked their comforting beliefs was immediately followed by another shock. The prophet turned to their worship and in words of blazing eloquence proclaimed God’s hatred of their religious observances. **Reread** Amos 5:21-24. Note: The Hebrew word for “hate” used in 5:15 is now applied in 5:21 to the very things they thought pleased the LORD.

5. From verses 21-23 record every phrase that expresses God’s deep anger with their worship.

Amos’ strong condemnation of their false worship is perhaps the most severe in the Bible.

6. Why did God “hate” Israel’s every act of worship? Review previous passages in Amos. Also reflect on 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Psalm 66:16-18; Hosea 6:6 and Micah 6:8.

7. a. What qualities would transform the people's meaningless worship into worship that was pleasing to God (verse 24)?

b. Using a dictionary to help you, define *justice* and *righteousness* in the context of the book of Amos.

8. Why do you think God says these virtues are essential for acceptable worship?

Amos 5:24 is one of the great metaphors in the Old Testament and one we need to ponder.

9. Paraphrase this marvelous verse to include words that make personal application to your life.

♥ **Store in your heart:** Amos 5:24

Amos traces the disobedience of God's people far back into their history in 5:25-26. **Review** these verses carefully. The words "Me" (NIV), "unto Me" (KJV) and "to Me" (Amplified) from Amos 5:25 are forceful and emphatic. Underline this phrase in your Bible; then **reread** verse 25.

10. How would you interpret Amos 5:25 and 26? Did God say that they did not offer sacrifices and offerings? Explain.

The defection to idolatry in the wilderness period is emphasized in Hosea 13:5-6 and Ezekiel 20:10-26. Let God speak to you as you **read** these passages aloud.

11. What motivates you in these passages to keep your heart from any form of idolatry?

Once again the people hear God's just verdict for their repulsive sins — "Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is God Almighty (Amos 5:27).

Much that is done today in the name of Christianity is equally offensive to God as what the Israelites were cited for.

12. How can we avoid incorporating false gods into our Christian worship services? (See Psalm 24:3-5; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and Mark 7:6-8 for examples.)

13. How might success, affluence and materialism, which is so prevalent in our society today, contaminate our worship of God?

For Thought and Discussion: What is your heart like when you participate in a worship service? When you worship are you more concerned about *your image* or *your attitude towards God*? Be honest. Do you *just* enjoy the rhythm and melody of the songs you sing, or do you really enter into the heart of worship? Compare your feelings with what the LORD requires with regards to justice and righteousness from Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:8; John 4:23-24; Ephesians 4:22-24.

*Come, let us bow down in worship,
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;
For He is our God
and we are the people of His pasture,
the flock under His care.
Psalm 95:6-7*

"Father God we praise You for Your faithfulness even when we are found unfaithful—for the incredible power of Your holiness in making the gift of redemption possible through the sacrifice of Your Son—we thank You for being the Shepherd of our souls who delights to lead us in paths of righteousness through the power of Your indwelling Holy Spirit—and for the unfathomable privilege of enjoying intimate fellowship with You (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). For this and immeasurably more—we offer You our unbridled praise—now and for evermore!"