

Date: 11 Dec 2022

Scripture Passage: Amos 3:1-4:13

Title: Two Charges Against Israel

Introduction

- First part of the book was the Spiral of Judgement Against the Nations. Each section began with “Thus says the LORD” (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6). Judgment was pronounced against each nation. We saw last week that Judah and Israel were to be judged. Charges, means that Israel has done wrong. Israel has sinned. Israel has committed a crime. These 12 tribes constituted the covenant people of God. God had entered into a special agreement with them, where they will be His people and He will be their God. God was to bless them, while they served Him. They were to be set apart, to be a witness to the surrounding nations. But they sinned against God. Especially the northern nation of Israel.
- The second part consists of 2 charges (Chap 3 first charge, Chap 4 second charge) +1 lamentation (Chap 5) against Israel, “Hear this word” (3:1; 4:1; 5:1). As we examine Chap 3 & 4, they are examples or illustrations of a few key points that we take away.
- This message is for us to take heed how we hear (cf. Luke 8:18) and examine your own heart.

Two divine principles introduced (3:1-8).

- “Principle of relative accountability” (1-3 cf. Luke 12:48). Israel was a privileged nation, chosen by God, called out of Egypt, “known” (loved) (v2). They were in a covenant with God where faithfulness was required. But Israel broke their covenant (3). To whom much is given, much will be expected. When God gives you more privileges, God expects more from you. That is why there are degrees of sin, and there are degrees of judgement. When one sins of ignorance, one will still be judged. But one who sins willfully, one will be judged and condemned even more so. Israel was in sin despite being God’s covenant people. We who are Christians ought to examine our own hearts. Don’t justify yourselves. Don’t blame others or circumstances. It is far safer in our walk with God that we examine our hearts often. When God is having dealings with you, take heed and examine your own heart.
- “Principle of cause and effect” (4-8). Lion roars because prey is caught (4). Bird falls because caught in snare (5). City under siege because the Lord has done it (6). There are times when poetry is written in ways to make it rhyme. Here we see v4-5 providing the prelude to the punchline in v6. The city of Samaria will be destroyed because of Israel’s sin, and the Lord has done it. Are you hearing Israel? What about us today? Are we hearing God’s call through the calamities that we are going through? Take heed, and examine your hearts. There may be things to put right in your life. Judgement from God is caused by sin in Israel. Similarly, Amos has to speak because God is moving him to do so (7). God is like a lion who has roared. Amos has to respond, and act as His mouthpiece (8). Israel must take heed of what God is saying! Heed these words!

The first charge: Israel’s social sins (3:9-3:15).

- Israel has sinned so blatantly, even the pagan nations will notice the chaos & oppression (9-11). There is no justice, there is violence & corruption even in the palaces (10). The enemies will certainly attack, persistently to sap your strength, & plunder you (11). In less than 30 years, the Assyrians will come and Israel fell in 722 BC.
- Only a small remnant will be left after the Assyrian invasion (12-15). The place of worship in Bethel will not be able to save Israel (13-14). They had represented Jehovah in an image of a calf. They put on a show of worship. All symbols of prosperity will be destroyed, winter house, summer house, great houses. It is so certain because the LORD has said it (15d). True godliness seen in behavior & way of life. What you are internally will manifest itself externally.

The second charge: Israel’s religious sins (4:1-13).

- The women folk of the nation have sinned (4:1-3). Often it is that the women form the strength of the church. Women play a very important role in the life of the church, in the household, in the nation. Women are capable of theological understanding. Behind every successful man is a woman. But women may also be the downfall of men, the household, the nation, the church. Here in this passage they are called “cows of Bashan”, oppressing others, instigating husbands (1b). The Assyrians will take them away as prisoners (2), straight to Harmon, in Assyria. (3). Their descendants will suffer oppression, led by fishhooks. Women, are you a helper for good or evil? Ladies in the church, are you a helper for good or evil?

- Israel had much external show of religion (4-5). They show themselves as religious, say the right words, and do the right thing. Are we Christian today the same? We are supposed to be saved, just like the Israelites were supposed to be the special chosen people of God. But are we outwardly appearing as Christians? You will be denied entry into heaven if you are not genuinely converted. God has said come to Him you who are heavy laden, and He will give you rest. Repent and trust in Christ. God chastised the Israelites by famine, but warning was not heeded (6). It was clear that God was giving warning by selective rain (7-8), crops failed from disease and locust attacks (9), deaths by plague and war (10). Israel could have gone extinct, like what happened to Sodom & Gomorrah (11). Despite all these warnings, Israel did not repent. Amos prophesied, “Yet you have not returned to me” (6, 8, 9, 10, 11). God is saying be prepared for judgement. God’s people will be chastised and will be punished (12). God is the creator of all things, He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and sovereign (13). This is the God that you are hearing. The Lord of hosts is His name. There is no escape from the all knowing creator.

Applications

- “Principle of relative accountability”. God has given you so many opportunities but you have not repented. You who are hearing this message will be held more accountable. In the case of Balaam, he was so obsessed with cursing Israel that he overlooked the fact that the donkey was speaking. Is anything in your life speaking to you? Did your car speak? Did your house speak? Did your pet, your computer, your plant speak? Your conscience may not be clear. You have not put things right. God may be trying to say something to you. Take heed, and examine your heart. The Lord of hosts is speaking to you. Repent before God’s heavy hand comes down on you.
- “Principle of cause and effect”. Final day judgement cannot be averted. God seeks repentance from individuals. Examine yourself whether your type of Christianity is a show. There is godliness without power in it (2Tim 3:5). God has spoken to you so many times, are you taking heed? Have you examined your heart? Heed the warning of God. Plead mercy from God in the name of His son the Lord Jesus Christ. May that happen to you today.