

GOD HATES FALSE RELIGION

TEXT: AMOS 5:21-27

Introduction:

1. Last week we studied the “day of the LORD” (5:20). One preacher said we now go from the day of the LORD to the “disgust of the LORD” (5:21).
2. A number of years ago I was invited to participate in a “focus group.” The discussion was about police brutality.
3. There were about a dozen or so participants – a few Baptist pastors, some Pentecostals, a RC priest, a couple of Jewish rabbis, etc.
4. Most of the so-called “clergymen (and clergywomen)” were not saved, but there were two or three who seemed to know the Lord.
5. Toward the end of the meeting, one of the rabbis rebuked me in front of everyone, calling me “intolerant,” etc. because I believe the only way to heaven is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
6. I did not respond to his rebuke, but waited till later when I had the opportunity to talk to him privately. I told him I was sorry to offend him but the Bible was clear (John 14:6).
7. He was seething with anger (like the hypocritical Pharisees of Jesus’ day) and continued to rebuke me. He actually looked like he wanted to hit me.
8. In the Bible we see that there are certain things God hates, and one of them is false religion (Amos 5:21).
9. God hates idolatry (5:26; cf. 4:4; 5:5).
10. God hates ritualism – emphasis on elaborate ceremonies, fancy colorful vestments, candles, sacraments, etc.
11. God hates sacerdotalism and priestcraft. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5).
12. Gary Cohen says, “Sacerdotalism is the doctrine that ceremonies themselves can grant righteousness to the one who participates in them” (*Hosea and Amos*).
13. God hates formalism – that is, strict adherence to external forms without any substance.
14. God hates syncretism – the satanic mixing of several different religions into a synthesized hodgepodge.
15. God hates hypocrisy. Our Lord said to the Pharisees, “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Matt. 23:13).

I. GOD DESPISED ISRAEL’S EMPTY RELIGION (5:21-23).

1. God hated their feast days (5:21).

2. God did not want to smell in their solemn assemblies (5:21).
3. God did not accept their burnt offerings and meat offerings (5:22).
4. God would not regard the peace offerings of their fat beasts (5:22).
5. God did not want to hear their music. It was “noise” (5:23).
6. It was not that they had introduced religious novelties. They were following the prescribed worship instituted by God Himself. The problem was their hypocrisy (5:25, 26).
7. God was telling them their hearts were not right (cf. Isaiah 1:13-18).
8. Israel’s sacrificial system pointed to the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross. Hebrews 9:12 says, “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

II. THE LORD DEMANDS REPENTANCE (5:24; cf. 4:6-13).

1. They needed to get their priorities right. Samuel said, “Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (I Sam. 15:22).
2. The Psalmist said, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66:18).
3. Hosea 6:6 says, “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”
4. Micah 6:8 says, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”
5. When a church is in a state of declension, it is not the doctrine (or even the church services) that goes first. By the time the doctrine and services start changing the church is already a mess.

III. THE LORD PRONOUNCES JUDGMENT (5:25-27).

1. Stephen quoted these Scriptures in Acts 7:42, 43 before he was killed.
2. Amos 5:25 appears to be a rhetorical question with a “yes” answer. But they also worshipped false gods like Moloch and Chiun (5:26).
3. Moloch was a heathen idol with outstretched arms. Babies and small children were placed in his outstretched arms and burned alive as a human sacrifice.
4. This is the only reference to Chiun in the Bible (5:26). Stephen referred to him as “Remphan” (Acts 7:43).
5. “The star of your god” (Amos 5:26; Acts 7:43) suggests both idolatry and astrology, and could be a reference to the Star of David (a six-pointed star called a hexagram).

6. God traced their unholy mixture of worship of Jehovah along with heathen idolatry back to their wilderness journeyings (Amos 5:25).
7. The Israelites worshipped the golden calf in the wilderness, and this idolatry was revived under King Jeroboam I, the first king of Israel after God divided Israel from Judah.
8. Jeroboam instituted this false worship in Bethel and Dan (Amos 4:4; 5:5; cf. I Kings 12:28-31).
9. Once again God warned them of the impending Assyrian invasion (5:27). Damascus was on the way to Assyria.
10. Stephen said, "I will carry you away beyond Babylon" (Acts 7:43), perhaps reminding his listeners of the 70-year Babylonian captivity.

CONCLUSION:

1. God has always rejected false religion. We can trace this all the way back to Genesis 4 when God rejected Cain's false worship.
2. "And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell" (Genesis 4:4, 5).
3. "A new religion has been initiated, which is no more Christianity than chalk is cheese; and this religion, being destitute of moral honesty, palms itself off as the old faith with slight improvements, and on this plea usurps pulpits which were erected for Gospel preaching. The atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction, and the resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren, and maintain a confederacy with them" – Charles H. Spurgeon.