

Amos 5:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.

Analysis

Amos's shocking warning: 'Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? for the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.' Israel eagerly anticipated the Day of the LORD—when God would intervene to judge enemies and exalt His people. Amos announces the opposite: for unfaithful Israel, that day brings judgment, not vindication. The imagery intensifies (v. 19): like escaping a lion only to meet a bear, or reaching home safely but being bitten by a serpent—no escape. 'Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?' (v. 20). This teaches that the Day of the LORD has two aspects: salvation for the faithful, judgment for the wicked—and covenant breaking puts one in the latter category regardless of ethnic identity. Romans 2:28-29 develops this: true Jews are those circumcised in heart.

Historical Context

Popular theology in Israel expected the Day of the LORD to mean defeat of pagan enemies (Assyria, Egypt, etc.) and Israel's exaltation as God's favored nation. Amos demolishes this assumption: because Israel violates covenant, that day brings their own destruction. The Day of the LORD theme runs through prophetic literature (Isaiah 2:12, Joel 2:1-11, Zephaniah 1:14-18, Malachi 4:5) with dual aspects: terror for the wicked, deliverance for the righteous. New Testament develops this: Christ's return brings salvation to believers, judgment to unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). We shouldn't presume membership in the visible church

guarantees escaping final judgment—only genuine faith in Christ saves (Matthew 7:21-23).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Do I have false security in religious identity while lacking genuine repentance and faith?
2. How should awareness that Christ's return brings judgment as well as salvation shape my evangelism and holiness?

Interlinear Text

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|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| ה וי | הַמְתַּאֲוִים | אֶת | י וֹם | יְהוָה | לָמָּה |
| Woe | unto you that desire | H853 | is it for you the day | of the LORD | to what end |
| H1945 | H183 | | H3117 | H3068 | H4100 |
| ה זָה | לָכֵן | י וֹם | יְהוָה | הוּא | וְלֹא |
| H2088 | H0 | is it for you the day | of the LORD | H1931 | is darkness |
| | | H3117 | H3068 | H2822 | H3808 |
| אֹר: | | | | | |
| and not light | | | | | |
| H216 | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Joel 1:15 (References Lord): Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

Joel 2:31 (Darkness): The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Jeremiah 30:7 (Parallel theme): Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

Isaiah 9:19 (Darkness): Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother.

Isaiah 5:30 (Light): And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

Isaiah 5:19 (Parallel theme): That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!

Malachi 4:1 (References Lord): For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Joel 2:10 (Darkness): The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

Ezekiel 12:27 (Parallel theme): Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off.

Ezekiel 12:22 (Parallel theme): Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?