

Amos 5:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light?
even very dark, and no brightness in it?

Analysis

Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? (halo-choshekh yom-YHWH velo-or, הַלֹא־חֹשֶׁךְ יוֹם־יְהוָה וְלֹא־אוֹר)—the rhetorical question expects "yes." Israel anticipated the Day of the LORD as light (or, אוֹר)—deliverance, vindication, blessing. Amos declares it will be darkness (choshekh, חֹשֶׁךְ)—judgment, calamity, destruction. The phrase **even very dark, and no brightness in it** (va'afel velo-nogah לוֹ, לֹא־נֹגַהּ וְלֹא־פֶלַח) intensifies the image: not just darkness but thick darkness (afel, אֶפֶל), with absolutely no brightness (nogah, נֹגַהּ, no glimmer of light).

"The day of the LORD" is a major prophetic theme—God's intervention in history to judge evil and vindicate His people (Isaiah 13:6-13; Joel 1:15, 2:1-11, 31; Zephaniah 1:14-18). Israel assumed they were the vindicated, not the judged. Amos reverses this: because of covenant violation, Israel will experience the Day of the LORD as darkness, not light. This prophetic theme culminates in Christ's second coming—for believers, a day of redemption (Luke 21:28); for unbelievers, a day of wrath (Revelation 6:15-17). The question isn't whether the Day comes but how we'll experience it.

Historical Context

In Amos's context (760-750 BC), Israel enjoyed prosperity and military success under Jeroboam II. They assumed God's favor and looked forward to His eschatological intervention against their enemies. Amos shocks them: God's intervention will target Israel for covenant unfaithfulness. Within 30 years,

Assyria's conquest (722 BC) brought exactly this darkness—death, exile, devastation. The Day they anticipated as triumph became their nightmare.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does presuming God's favor while living in unrepentant sin set people up for devastating judgment?
2. In what ways does the New Testament's teaching on Christ's return as both hope (for believers) and terror (for unbelievers) echo Amos 5:20?

Interlinear Text

הָלֹא	חֹשֶׁךְ	יּוֹם	יְהוָה	וְלֹא	אֹר
H3808	be darkness	Shall not the day	of the LORD	H3808	and not light
	H2822	H3117	H3068		H216
לְאֶפֶס	וְלֹא	נֹגַהּ	לֵי:		
even very dark	H3808	and no brightness	H0		
H651		H5051			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 13:10 (Light): For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

Ezekiel 34:12 (Darkness): As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

Zephaniah 1:15 (Darkness): That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

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