

Seek the Lord and Live: Seeking God in Worship, Belief and Action

Sunday, February 06, 2011
9:03 AM

1. Introduction - Seek the Lord and Live
 - a. Amos made up of several individual messages
 - b. So far, Judgment (chp. 1-2, 3) and Refusal to Repent (chp. 4)
 - c. Topic here = call to repentance
 - i. "Seek the Lord"
 - 1) Tempted to say more than repentance, but repentance = total lifestyle
 - 2) Luther Quote (95 Thesis #1):

Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said *Poenitentiam agite*, willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.
 - ii. Tells us what must accompany true repentance
 - a. Message starts with a review - judgment is coming
2. Judgment is coming (vs 1 - 3)
 - a. Not dwell since already covered
 - b. Three things:
 - i. Virgin Israel - contrast with what Israel should have been
 - 1) Dedicated to God, but fallen from God
 - 2) Ought to have been pure and innocent, but sinful
 - ii. Hopelessness of the situation (none to raise her up)
 - 1) Ties the discussion back to the end of Amos 2
 - iii. The severity of punishment (1000/100, 100/10)
3. Three calls to repentance
 - a. Three calls
 - i. Focused on worship, belief, action
 - ii. Each is dealt with separately, but they all go together
 - 1) You can't seek God in true worship if you don't seek God in true belief, etc.
 - b. Constructed similarly each time
 - i. Seek the Lord
 - ii. If you do, God may be merciful
 - iii. What you have been doing is not seeking the Lord
 - iv. Reminder of Punishment Against Evil
 - 1) Eph 5:6-7

- c. First call to repentance (vs 4 - 5)
 - i. Here emphasis = worship
 - 1) Bethel = Golden Calves, main Israel worship (I Kings 12:25-33)
 - 2) Gilgal = Historical place for worshipping God (Joshua 4:1-3, 19-20; 5:1-10; I Samuel 10:7-8; 11:12-15; 15:32-33)
 - 3) Beersheba had ancient significance in worshipping God (Genesis 21:33; 46:1)
 - ii. To seek the Lord requires a certain type of worship
 - 1) God prescribed worship in the Old Testament
 - a) Much of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy
 - 2) God has prescribed worship in the New Testament
 - a) Not going to exhaustively describe
 - i) My point here is to outline the basis of my assertion
 - ii) Not to examine specifically what worship is prescribed this morning
 - b) Some examples
 - i) Ephesians 5:19-20
 - One. Commands the church to sing with/to one another
 - ii) I Timothy 5:17, II Timothy 4:1-2
 - One. Commands the elders to preach the word
 - iii) Acts 2:42
 - One. Commands (by example) the preaching of the word, the sacraments, and prayer
 - 3) Worshipping 'God' is not enough we must do it as He prescribes
 - a) Golden Calf (Ex 32:1-6)
 - i) Can't make up how you're going to worship God
 - b) Unauthorized fire (Lev 10:1-3)
 - i) Can't add to the worship of God
 - c) Saul's Offering (I Samuel 13:8-14)
 - i) Can't do the worship of God in a way it was not prescribed
 - d) Saul's Second Offering (I Samuel 15:10-23)
 - i) Can't worship God with a bad motive
 - 4) Calvin Quote:

It is indeed a proof of true conversion, when the sinner is displeased with himself on account of his sins and hates the things which before pleased him and with a changed mind devotes himself wholly to God. It is of this that the Prophet now treats: as though he said, 'If there is in you a purpose to return to God, cast away all your superstitions: for these two things true religion and idolatry, cannot be joined together. As long then as ye remain fixed in that false worship, to which you have accustomed yourselves, ye continue alienated from

God. Then reconciliation with him demands that you bid adieu to all your corrupt forms of worship.” The import of the whole then is this, that the Israelites could not be reconciled to God, except they departed from their superstitions. Let them turn away, he says, from *Bethel, and Gilgal, and Beersheba.*

We indeed know that the calves were made at Bethel: and Gilgal, no doubt, became celebrated for the passing of the people over Jordan, and also, as it is well known, for the circumcising of the children of Abraham: and as to Beersheba, we know that Abraham dwelt there for a long time, and frequently offered sacrifices to God. Now, this vicious zeal ever prevails in the world: without reason or judgment it lays hold on something special, when it undertakes to set up the worship of God, as we see to be the case under the Papacy. But God has prescribed to us a certain rule according to which he is to be worshipped: it is not then his will that there should be a mixture of our inventions. When therefore the posterity of Abraham presumptuously availed themselves of his example, and when they extolled the memorable event of the circumcision, God repudiated all contrivances of this kind: for as it was well known, it was expressly his will to be worshipped at Jerusalem: and by appointing one tabernacle and one altar, he designed to cherish unity and concord among the people. we now then understand that it was the intention of Amos to show, that the conversion of the people would be fictitious, until they turned away from all the superstitions and vicious modes of worship, in which they had habituated themselves: hence, *Seek not Bethel, come not to Gilgal, pass not over to Beersheba.*

The same thing may be said at this day to those who wish to blend the dregs of the Papacy with the pure and holy worship of God; for there are at this day many go-betweens, who, while they see that our doctrine cannot be disapproved or, yet wish to contrive some middle course: that is, they wish to reconcile Popery with the doctrine of the Gospel. But the Prophet shows that such a mixture cannot be endured by God. How so? Because light cannot agree with darkness. Hence, corruptions, except they be abolished, will always subvert the true worship of God. We now see, that the lesson conveyed by this doctrine is, that the pure worship of God cannot be restored while the corruptions of the world, which are contrary to his word, prevail.

i. Why has God prescribed worship?

- 1) Our worship here should be a copy of heavenly things (Heb 8:3-5; 9:11-12)
 - a) How we worship is important because we are supposed to be copying something - the true, unadulterated worship that occurs in heaven
- 2) Our vain imaginations cannot produce something pleasing to God (Mark 7:6-7)
 - a) How we worship is important because we are unable to come up with how to worship on our own (Jeremiah 17:9)
- 3) True worship will bring us true pleasure (Isaiah 58:13-14)

a. Second call to repentance (vs 6-9)

i. Here emphasis = beliefs/attitudes about God

- 1) Starts with actions - all of these are tied together
 - a) Justice -> wormwood = poor beliefs about who God is
- 2) Moves into who God is

- ii. To seek the Lord requires certain beliefs and attitudes about God
 - 1) Here the greatness of God is emphasized
 - a) As on Wed - we talked that God is really big
 - b) The greatness and majesty of God ought to prompt us to deep repentance
 - i) When we recognize the greatness of who we are in rebellion against, we should desire to turn away
 - 2) Three aspects of the greatness of God
 - a) Three of the main aspects of God in how he relates to us (actually four)
 - b) God is the Creator (Pleiades and Orion)
 - c) God is the Sustainer (Darkness/Morning, Waters/Sea)
 - d) God is the Judge (Destruction)
 - e) Conclusion: The LORD is His name

- iii. Why does seeking the Lord require certain beliefs about God
 - 1) If we fail to regard God as God, we cannot be in true repentance
 - a) When we believe to God to be other than He is we have made idols in our vain imagination
 - b) Serving a God of your own making cannot be serving God (Isaiah 45:18-25)
 - 2) Since God is perfect, any belief about God that is not true is necessarily a lessening of His glory

- b. Third call to repentance (vs 10-15)
 - i. Here emphasis = actions
 - 1) Notice not 'seek the Lord' but seek good
 - 2) Equivalent though, hypothesis above - must seek God in certain ways
 - a) Seek God = seek good
 - b) Only way to seek good is to seek God (Isaiah 58:6-12)

 - ii. To seek the Lord requires certain actions
 - 1) To repent means something = to turn away
 - a) Have evil and love good
 - 2) Hating evil and loving good has content to it
 - a) Establish justice
 - b) Enjoy instruction
 - c) Speak the truth
 - d) Care for the poor

- iii. Why does seeking God require certain actions?
 - 1) If you don't turn away from evil then you aren't repenting, by definition

- c. Conclusion - Reminder of Punishment
 - i. The passage closes with a reminder of punishment again
 - ii. Since repentance of this manner has not happen, punishment will happen
 - iii. Reminders of punishment in the Bible ought to spur us to repentance

- d. Response to Objections
 - i. Objection 1: The Lord is our God and will fight for us
 - 1) Response: Why do you think God would fight for you? (vs 18-20)
 - 2) Won't cover in depth because Dan went over last week well - the day of the Lord will bring judgment for everyone
 - ii. Objection 2: But we serve God
 - 1) Response: Why do you think God is pleased with your service? (vs 21-27)
 - 2) The Israelites didn't worship God as He prescribed, they didn't believe God was who He said he was, and they denied God by their actions
 - 3) Therefore, their self-made 'worship' was hateful to God: compares it to the worship in the wilderness
 - a) It doesn't matter what we do to 'serve' or 'worship' God if we aren't in true repentance and seeking the Lord how He desires to be sought

- e. But let justice roll down like waters
 - i. An interesting verse....how to interpret
 - ii. Decided that God is the actor here (God rolls down justice)
 - 1) Three things:
 - a) The vengeance of God on sin
 - i) God, in holy wrath, will wash away false worship and all other evil, justice will roll down like waters

Some again regard the verse as a threatening, and think that God here reproves the Israelites, as though he had said, that since they were trifling with and mocking him, he would at length show what was true righteousness and what was true judgment: for hypocrites think that they come not short of a perfect state, when they are veiled by theft

ceremonies, inasmuch as they flee to these lurking holes, when they would cover all their [wicked] deeds. Hence they think not that they are guilty, for they hide their sins under their ceremonies as under Ajax's shield. Seeing then that they thus trifle with God, some interpreters think that God here sharply reproves them and says, that they were greatly deceived, for he would himself at length make known what was true righteousness. Righteousness then shall run down ... Judgment shall be a violent stream. But hypocrites amuse themselves as children do with their puppets. Inasmuch then as they do nothing seriously, and yet desire to pacify God as with baubles, the Prophet here shakes off such delusions, as though he said, "Do you think that God is like a child? why do you set up these trifles? Do you think that righteousness is a fictitious thing, or that judgment is a vain figment? The Lord will certainly show to you how precious righteousness is. *It shall therefore run down as violent waters, as an impetuous stream.* "Judgment," he says "shall rush upon you and overwhelm you."

- i) An image of the flood washing away the sin of humanity by destroying it
One. As the flood showed God's justice and His mercy, I believe this verse does as well

- b) The righteousness that God provides to His people
 - i) God's people had proven that they lacked justice and righteousness
 - ii) Therefore God will provide righteousness for them, His justice, flowing like waters will wash away their sins because the stroke fell on Christ, His righteousness, flowing like an ever-flowing stream, will provide righteousness for His people
 - iii) Not different than the first, God's righteousness and justice will flow down and destroy evil, but in His mercy God will provide that righteousness to those whom He has chosen

- c) The righteousness that will be worked in God's people due to the righteousness God provides in His people
 - i) As the flow of God's righteousness and justice wipes away the guilt of evil, they also destroy evil in a real way and provide true righteousness and justice for us to live in

- 2) This, in my estimation, is the most important verse in the passage
 - a) Concludes the passage - without true repentance justice will come and destroy you
 - b) Teaches us about three offices of Christ
 - i) Christ as judge

- ii) Christ as redeeming sacrifice
- iii) Christ as sanctifier