

The Lament

Study Questions | 02.25.24

Brett McBride | Amos 5



Consider

Discuss: The Word “lament” is becoming more popular and allows us to explore a way to unload and upload the heaviness and concerns of our heart to God. Amos’ name actually means Burden-bearer! Talk about grief and how it affects people.



Let's Examine

Setting the stage: Amos 5

- **Explore:** Read through the chapter several times looking for the following: Find the number of times the word ‘lament’ (or a derivative) appears. Find the words righteous(ness) and (in)justice. Find the phrases which start with the word ‘Seek’.
- **Explore:** Find out what these mean and what their meaning adds to our understanding of Amos’ Lament:
 - Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba
 - Wormwood (if you use a different translation than NIV)
 - ‘the day of the Lord’
- **Once more:** List the ways that the Israelites have sinned, transgressed, and live in opposition to God’s ways and character which are described in this chapter. Compare them to Justice and Righteousness. Try to describe each of those transgressions in the opposite; as if they had been living by justice and righteousness.
- **Discuss:** What is the significance of each of the “Therefore’s in the chapter.
- **Discuss:** In the end, God is rejecting their acts of worship. Discuss God’s expressions in vv21-23. Describe God’s state based on his words.
- **Discuss:** *Mishpat* (Justice) and *Tsedekah* (righteousness) are at the center of this chapter – and woven throughout the Old Testament. “*God’s justice is informed by His righteous character*” (Brett). What does that mean? How does this relate to “Love God... and love your neighbour as yourself” (Deut 6:5, Lev19:18)?

The danger is – that we are constantly redefining good and evil in order to justify why it’s okay to harm others. What makes us able to do this to other human beings? One of the products of the Fall – was the tendency to ‘other’ people who are different than us. (Brett)

- Brett repeated the phrase “sin makes us ‘other’ other people” in his sermon. What does it mean and how is it in opposition to God’s view of humanity, His righteousness and His justice.
- Amos 5:13, shows a significant outcome of a society where sin and evil have become the system.
- **Discuss:** What does this verse tell us about how ingrained and systematized the way of thinking had become?

Church history: a very brief summary

Justifying sin: Brett mentioned a number of aspects of history and thinking which lead to some very distorted theology which allowed some to justify the slave trade.

1. **Great Chain of Being:** originally from Plato and Aristotle but expanded by Plonitus
 2. **Tensions between culture and scripture:** Created arguments (theologies) which they distorted were
 - The Curse of Ham: Ham was cursed, descendants settled in Africa, destined to serve his brothers forever, therefore ok for them to be enslaved.
 - Degeneration from Babel: God scattered Humanity, segments were cut off and devolved into savages. Therefore need to enslave them, civilize them and Christianize them.
 3. **Throwing off God altogether:** Justifying thinking using 'science'
 - a. Dr. William Petty: trying to harmonize the Great chain of Being with Scripture
 - b. Charles Linnaeus: grouped humans into 4 types creating classifications of humanity – “homosapien”
 - c. Edward Long: ‘the Father of Biological racism’ – different species altogether – property
 - d. Charles Darwin: Origin of the species: humanity evolved, survival of the fittest, allows for domination
 - e. Francis Galton: Eugenics: planned breeding, facilitate racial improvement, perfect humanity... leading to thinking like that of Adolf Hitler
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So, what you see in the Church [was] warped theology to justify sin and oppression. And what you see in the culture [was] warped philosophy and junk science to justify sin and oppression.

Here's the problem with all of it!...

There is only one race – the human race! Made in the image and likeness of God!

Sure, there are many ethnicities and cultural identities – the Bible includes those distinctions -

– but there is only 1 race of man – 1 species – the human race!

Race, and racism, is a social construct fashioned during a time of oppression and an unjust othering of humanity! But it has permeated society on so many levels!

It was a multi-disciplinary ‘othering’ of humanity who were fashioned by the Creator in His image and likeness!

And to a world architecting a system of hierarchy and race – Amos Laments:

Amos 5:7 There are those who turn JUSTICE into bitterness and cast RIGHTEOUSNESS to the ground. (Brett)

Discuss: What Bible verses – across both the Old and New Testaments - support the idea of one human race? What verses celebrate God’s love for all people globally? What verses talk about different people groups, ethnicities and distinctions with honour and respect? (Here are some, but please find others: Acts 10:34-36, Revelation 7:9-10, Isaiah 56: 1-8)

Let's Apply

The idea of “other”ing other people leads to injustice and comes from a heart of unrighteousness. There are myriad of examples of people being ‘other’ed in history and today.

- **Personal Reflection:** Spend some time, ask God to reveal any ways that you might “other” other people.
- **Reflection:** How do you feel about the progression of the idea of ‘race’ and it’s ultimate “othering” of people? What does it make you think? What do you want to say to God about it?

Do you feel the need to Lament? : Do you want to join AMOS in his ‘passionate expression of grief or sorrow’? Know that Lamenting is something that people of God have done for thousands of years – including David. If you want to know more, look at these Psalms. Psalm 13, 22, 80. Talk in your group about how lamenting is helpful.

There are 4 parts to prayers of lament which might be helpful:

1. *As you take your heavy heart to God: acknowledge your heart’s heaviness to Him.*
2. *Cry out your complaint to Him. Shake your fist, allow yourself to be grumpy or angry.*
3. *Ask God to hear you and respond.*
4. *Confess your Trust in Him and who He is.*

Let's Pray

- **Spend time praising God:** for His intricate and beautiful creation – the human being.
- **Confess** (silently or out loud) when you have chosen power, oppression and greed over care, love and sacrifice.
- **Ask the Holy Spirit** to empower each person in your group to live in an attitude of seeking God's ways, His Righteousness and His Kingdom, first (Matthew 6:33), expressing His justice to all.
- **Continue to pray** for the church around the world; That we will follow the ways of God – reflecting His Character and heart, seeking His righteousness first and expressing His justice to all.