

Committed to Justice

Key Verse: “Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.”
—Amos 5:24

Selected Scripture:
Amos 5:10-15; 21-24;
8:4-12

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AT MT. SINAI THE ISRAEL-ites unanimously agreed to observe and obey all elements of God's perfect Law. “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.” (Deut. 27:26) The people routinely transgressed that agreement—transgression with which God exercised great patience. Unfortunately, Israel mistook God's patience as lack of Divine commitment to justice. “The LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.” (II Kings 13:23) The phrase ‘as yet’ implies that if the Israelites continued to dishonor God, by underestimating his commitment to righteousness, his regard for the faithfulness of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would not indefinitely protect Israel from being judged, sentenced, cast off and destroyed.

Inevitably, Divine judgment was pronounced upon unrepentant Israel. God foretells the dire consequences for that people in the form of a long lament through the prophet Amos—a lament characterized in the following verses: “Hear ye this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel. The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is cast down upon her

land; there is none to raise her up. Therefore thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, the Lord: Wailing shall be in all the broad ways; and they shall say in all the streets, Alas! Alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful in lamentation to wailing.”—Amos 5:1,2,16, *American Standard Version, 1901*

By this was Israel judged. God called for that judgment to ‘run down as waters.’ Consequently, it coursed along with Israel through more than seven centuries of history, figuratively becoming a threatening ‘mighty stream’ as it drew ever nearer the day of its fulfillment in righteousness. When that day arrived, God’s judgment, pronounced in detail so long before in Amos, washed as an overwhelming flood over Israel. “The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.” (Amos 8:7-9) The predicted details of the trembling land and darkness at midday were fulfilled the day that Christ Jesus died on the cross at Calvary. “Now from the sixth hour [noon] there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour [3 P.M.].” (Matt 27:45) When Jesus breathed his last, “the earth did quake [tremble], and the rocks rent.”—vs. 51

Thus did God’s utter commitment to justice begin its full expression; culminating in Israel’s later being cast off. (chap. 23:37,38) All access to Divine courts, through Moses, the Law, and its covenant, was terminated. Thereafter, Jew and Gentile alike must come to God through Jesus Christ. “Jesus saith, . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6) Those who persisted in seeking access to God by other means would not find it. ■