

"BUT THEY ARE NOT GRIEVED FOR THE AFFLICTION OF JOSEPH"

Contributed by Administrator
Wednesday, 18 May 2005
Last Updated Friday, 20 January 2006

A Small Group Discussion on Economic Justice

By Jim Jordal

- CONTENT: READ ALOUD THIS PASSAGE: AMOS 6:3-6

Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who cause the seat of violence to come near; who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall; who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, and invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

Scripture from the New King James Version. Copyright 1978, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

- BACKGROUND:

Amos, whose name means "burden-bearer," was a herdsman from the small village of Tekoa, 10 miles south of Jerusalem. Despite his humble origins, he was called by God to prophesy mainly to the northern 10 tribes of Israel centered in the region of Samaria. His message comes during the mid-eighth century B.C. during a period of considerable prosperity, and concerns itself with two major sins within the nation: apostasy from the true worship of Jehovah and the failure of economic and social justice under king Jereboam II of Israel. Amos is especially eloquent in describing the arrogant, callused, unconcerned attitude of the rich toward the injustices being perpetrated upon the poor. In speaking of Joseph, Amos is describing the common people of the land, who are at least partially descended from the patriarch Joseph (of the coat of many colors).

- QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- What parallels can you find between what Amos described and what exists in our society?
- What does Amos seem to mean when he says they "put far off the day of doom"?
- What does he mean when he says they "cause the seat of violence to come near"?
- Amos appears to be describing a decadent, complacent society. Does this apply to us?
- How much concern do you see from the wealthy in our society for the plight of the poor?
- How much concern do you feel yourself for the poor? Why?
- What can you do to break the complacency toward suffering so evident today?
- What does this message of Amos say specifically to you? To your church?

- PRINCIPLES FOR CONSIDERATION:

- Serious concern by the rich for the poor is a rare thing in history.
- What concern there is usually centers around charity, not direct support or advocacy.
- Advocacy means speaking out against those personal and societal factors causing poverty.
- The biblical role of government is not limited to charity. Government is mainly responsible for creating a "level playing field" through ethical legislation and adjudication.

- REFERENCES:

Ps. 37:12-15; Ps. 41:1; Ps. 146:7-9; Prov. 18:23; Prov. 19:17; Prov. 29:7; Ecc. 5:8-9.