

Sunday School Lesson

By Bessie Wilbon

INTRODUCTION

The Old and New Testaments both carry the theme of judgment throughout. From the first disobedience of God in the Garden of Eden to the last chapter of Revelation, the certainty of judgment is affirmed.

The necessity of judgment rests upon two very significant facts: First, the Creator of the universe is a righteous God who must have an interest in the moral order of the world. To deny this would be to deny the very nature of God. Secondly, man is a responsible being, and consequently accountable to God. There is a moral order to the universe. In addition, there has been a revelation of the divine will for man to contemplate. Even apart from this revealed will of God, there is a law written in the heart by which a man may be judged, so that he is without excuse for his misdeed whether or not he has known the law, (Romans 2:11-15). Because God is righteous and man is accountable, judgment is inevitable.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There was great prosperity for the king, the nobles, and the rich merchants who lived in luxury. They were so wealthy as to have both winter houses and summer houses decorated with ivory. But their affluence had not been the result of honest toil. It had come through cruel oppression and the enslavement of the common people. At times it was outright violence and robbery. At other times, they resorted to bribery and injustice. Sensual pleasure was a constant pursuit. No pity was shown to the destitute. (Read the Book of Amos.)

THE LESSON

Amos loathed the degraded religious practice of Israel. Yet his heart yearned for the people. Twice when God's punishment was to fall on them, Amos prayed that they might be spared, and his prayer was heard. His was not a joyous assignment.

Why would Amos undertake such a mission? Why indeed, if it were not through the impelling influence of the Spirit of God working in and through him? Amos was not a prophet by profession. He was a herdsman and the Lord said to him, "Go prophesy unto my people Israel," (Amos 7:14, 15).

"These are the words of Amos, a shepherd from the town of Tekoa." (Tekoa was situated on a bare ridge about 12 miles south of Jerusalem. The area was rather desolate, bordering the wilderness of Judah. It is not likely that it provided Amos with any great wealth. It was in this circumstance that God "took" him and sent him to Bethel.) "Two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam, son of Jehoash, was king of Israel, God revealed to Amos all these things about Israel."

The Lord says, "The people of Damascus have sinned again and again, and for this I will certainly punish them. They treated the people of Gilead with savage cruelty. So I will send fire upon the palace built by King Hazael and I will burn down the fortresses of King Benhadad."

The Lord says, "The people of Edom have sinned again and again, and for this I will certainly punish them. They hunted down their brothers, the Israelites, and showed them no mercy. Their anger had no limits, and they never let it die. So I will send fire upon the city of Teman and burn down the fortresses of Bozrad," (Amos 1:3, 4, 11, 12).

Uzziah was a good king, and under his leadership and example it is likely that the character and integrity of the kingdom of Judah far exceeded that of Israel at the time. It may be for this reason that God directed His prophet to the kingdom of Israel. Since Uzziah died about 740 B.C., Amos' ministry must be dated before that time, but his revealed message is valid for all time.

Amos began his message in Israel with a pronouncement of doom upon Damascus. This city was the capitol of Syria and had often fought with Israel in bloody warfare. When Amos preached against the nations, he began by delivering God's indictment on their transgressions. Their sins were clear, and Amos made it clear that they would be punished because of those sins.

It is no different today. God's law of harvest is still in effect. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," (Galatians 6:7). The individual or the nation that persists in breaking God's laws will eventually be punished.

The Lord says, "The people of Israel have sinned again and again, and for this I will certainly punish them. They sell into slavery honest men who cannot pay their debts, poor men who cannot repay even the prices of a pair of sandals. They trample down the weak and helpless and push the poor out of the way. A man and his father have intercourse with the same slave girl, and so profane my holy name. At every place of worship men sleep on clothing that they have taken from the poor as security for debts. In the temple of their God they drink wine which they have taken from those who owe them money," (Amos 2:6-8).

Men do terrible things because of greed (women, too). They traffic in alcohol and drugs. They corrupt society. They steal, cheat, take bribes and even commit murder. In Israel, they were no less greedy. The law provided that a poor man could sell himself as a servant, for a period of time that was not to exceed six years, (Leviticus 25:39, 40; Deuteronomy 15:12). This provision for satisfying creditors was abused by demanding the sale of a poor man for such a trifling matter as a pair of shoes. Perfectly legal - grossly immoral.

The remedy for evil is in knowing and doing the will of God. We need to know His Word and pray that His Word may be made known and that His will be done. We can add to the spiritual reserves of those around us by actively committing ourselves to doing His will. In addition, we must learn to articulate our faith.

We can seek opportunities to serve in the various ministries of the church. We can support missions and Christian colleges where future leaders of the Lord's church are being trained.



Pictured above are members of the State Coalition Planning Committee of the National Council of Negro Women, Charlotte Chapter. Left to right are: Geraldine Powe, Communications; June C. Davenport, President; Rev. Mrs. Minnie Conner, chaplain;

Allean Conner, Program Chairman; Ophelia Gray, President Emeritus and winning Baby Contestant Sponsor; and, Meta Waldon, Board Member of the Teenage Pregnancy Advisory Council. (Photo by Peeler's Portrait Studio)

Local NCNW To Host State Coalition

The Charlotte Chapter of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) will host the North Carolina State Coalition of NCNW Saturday, June 15, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at Memorial Presbyterian Church, 2600 Beatties Ford Rd.

The National Council of Negro Women has as one of its current major objectives the prevention of widespread teenage pregnancy. Through cooperative educational efforts with concerned agencies, organizations, and professionals at the local, state and national levels, NCNW plans to make a difference by increased awareness and participation of others concerned also with the issue.

The theme of the Charlotte meeting will be "Preventing Children From Having Children in The '80s". A stimulating and informative panel discussion on direct issues will be

presented. A question and answer period will follow the discussion.

Panelists will include: Mary Maxwell, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools--"Teaching Sex Education in the Public School"; Cheryl Miller, RN OBGYN, Memorial Hospital--"Physiological Aspects"; Dr. Ida Richmond, Psychologist, Mecklenburg County Mental Health-

"Psychological Aspects"; and

Richard Campbell, Youth Director, Seigle Avenue Presbyterian Church.

All concerned members and leaders of the Charlotte community are urged to take part in helping to make this an informative and productive session.



Health Problems

Early detection can be the key to controlling health problems and free health care screenings can help discover a condition in its early stages.

During the Medicine Shoppes' Senior Spirit Week, two health screenings will be offered free to the public.

A foot screening will be held on June 4 by local podiatrists. Dr. Paul Reiss will be at the pharmacy, 2919 Central Avenue, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. and Dr. Cawthorn will be at the Medicine Shoppe, 6021 C The Plaza, from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. The podiatrists will perform foot checks and answer questions about proper foot care.

Then, on June 6 qualified personnel will take people's blood pressure readings from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. at both Medicine Shoppes. No appointment is required to participate in the screenings.

While the screenings are not diagnostic, they do provide a way for people to take an active role in their own health maintenance. And anyone found with a potential problem is advised to see their specialist for further testing.

For more information about the foot or blood pressure screenings, call the Medicine Shoppe nearest you.



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Salem Spirit

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