



OHBC MEMORY VERSE – WEEK #30

THIS WEEK'S VERSE: AMOS 8:11

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.”

Why Amos 8:11?

Because we are living in the midst of the very time of Amos' prophecy!

The famine that Amos mentions is actually one of 13 famines identified in the Bible. Of the 13, 11 are past, one if them is yet future (prophesied to take place during the opening of the 3rd seal in the Tribulation Period – Rev. 6:5-6), and the other is the one Amos mentions here, that we are actually experiencing right now in these last days of the Laodicean Church Period (Rev. 3:14-22).

Note what the Lords says about the uniqueness of this particular famine. It is not a physical famine, as in the famine in Somalia or some other part of the 21st century world where there is a shortage of food and water. The famine he is prophesying is a SPIRITUAL famine that is specifically related to what is happening, or perhaps more accurately stated, what is NOT happening in our day concerning the proclamation of the Word and Words of God. God says through Amos, that this spiritual famine is not the result of there being a shortage of Bibles. In our country, most Christian homes have more Bibles than they have occupants! Nor is the spiritual famine the result of there being a shortage of pastors, or even a shortage of sermons, because again, churches all over the country and the world have both every week. What God says is in short supply during our time, even to the point of causing spiritual starvation, is “of hearing the words of the Lord.” If we could see the spiritual condition of Christians in our day in a physical representation, we would see sunken eyes, emaciated limbs, and swollen bellies.

It is this same famine to which Paul was referring when he presented Timothy with the urgent charge to “Preach the Word” in II Tim. 4:2. Paul charges Timothy with this priority because he said, “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers (not PREACHERS!), having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (II Tim. 4:3-4). We are living in that time. Note that Paul's strong admonition and command is to “PREACH the Word”! Not “teach,” but “preach” (as important as biblical teaching is in our time!). (Just for clarification, all biblical preaching includes teaching, but not all biblical teaching includes preaching. Preaching is defined in verse 2 of II Timothy 4, as that which “reproves” (or, convicts), “rebukes” (or, confronts), and “exhorts” (or, challenges) “with all longsuffering and doctrine” – and there's the “teaching” aspect.)! And also note, the charge is not just to preach as opposed to just teach, but to “Preach the WORD”! Not “preach sermons.” Not “preach about the Word.” Not even “preach from the Word.” But, “preach THE Word”! God is saying here through Paul the same thing He was saying through Amos. The spiritual famine in the last days is the result of there being a shortage in the proclamation of the Word and Words of God. People in Laodicean want (have “itching ears” – II Tim. 4:3) to know about the Word as long as it is something that can make our life more comfortable (i.e. “lukewarm”), or something we can use to flaunt our knowledge. We want to hear eloquent teachers use the Bible, or hear an entertaining speaker (i.e. who can evoke an emotion out of us, whether it be laughter or tears) speak from the Bible, as long as what we hear doesn't mean we have to disrupt our lives or change our lifestyles.

The purpose for hiding Amos 8:11 in our hearts is to constantly remind us of what God says is the spirit of our age, so we can “try the spirits” (I John 4:1) when it comes to the to the preaching we hear, to determine whether it is “of God” (I John 4:1). Because of Amos 8:11 and its New Testament counterpart in II Tim. 4:1-4, let's pray that our church will forever be non-stereotypical of Laodicea in the preaching department!

DAY 146

TODAY'S READING: PROVERBS 29-31

OVERVIEW:

More warnings and instructions; the words of Agur; the words that Lemuel's mother taught him.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Because of the vast number of subject changes in each day's reading in the Book of Proverbs this has been perhaps the most difficult of all of the Books we have read thus far in our 365 Days of Pursuit to adequately formulate the "Highlights and Insights" Section. As has been mentioned repeatedly, it is a Book that merits continual reading, study, and memorization.

Whereas the Book of Psalms presents the HEART of GOD, the Book of Proverbs presents the MIND of GOD, or perhaps more specifically, the MIND of CHRIST (I Cor. 2:16). It is the most intricate Book in the entire Bible to show us how God thinks, or to show us "the mind of the Lord" (I Cor. 2:16). It basically reveals to us God's viewpoint and opinion on every issue of life. If, as God's people, we would simply make God's opinion as it is revealed in the Book of Proverbs, our opinion, and if we would adopt God's viewpoint as it is revealed in the Book of Proverbs, as our viewpoint, not only would it SIMPLIFY our lives, it would REVOLUTIONIZE our lives!

Whereas the Book of Leviticus is an intricate Book detailing God's instruction concerning the PHYSICAL aspects of Israel's life, I like to view the Book of Proverbs as an intricate Book detailing God's instruction concerning the SPIRITUAL aspects of a believer's life. Any squabble or conflict we face in life, whether it be relational or financial, whether it be in our home, church, workplace or neighborhood, it can invariably be traced back to a violation of something God specifically revealed in this Book. The Book of Proverbs is that comprehensive and that practical!

If we would simply allow this Book to be our wise Counselor for living life, by the time we apply God's wisdom as it is revealed in the first 30 chapters, we would be the "Virtuous Woman" of chapter 31. (Remember, as Christians, we are identified biblically as women. We are a bride – Rev. 21:9. We are virgins – II Cor. 11:2). The question of Proverbs 31:10 is a good one: "Who can find a virtuous woman?" The answer in the Laodicean Church Period is, NOT MANY! She is hard to find. She is extremely rare. She is almost extinct. Are you a "virtuous woman"?

For more practical application concerning the "Virtuous Woman," please re-read the Memory Verse explanation for Week #20, presented on Day 96, Monday, May 16th.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As THE ONE WHO DESCENDED FROM AND ASCENDED TO HEAVEN – Prov. 30:4 (John 3:13 – Jesus came down from heaven, even the Son of Man Who is (now) in heaven.)

DAY 147

TODAY'S READING: ECCLESIASTES 1-6

OVERVIEW:

The vanity or emptiness of life under the sun (apart from God); the vanity in life's cycles (chapter 1); the vanity in life's pursuit (chapter 2); the vanity of time (chapter 3); the vanity of social status (chapter 4); the vanity of religion and riches (chapter 5); the vanity of long life (chapter 6).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

To help fit the Book of Ecclesiastes into the big picture, understand that whereas the Book of Psalms reveals the HEART of GOD, and the Book of Proverbs reveals the MIND of CHRIST, the Book of Ecclesiastes reveals to us the MIND of the SPIRIT. It is a Book that shows the great contrast between the workings of the spirit of man and the Spirit of God.

Ecclesiastes is written by King Solomon, the son of King David, in his old age after a life full of selfish living and many regrets. He writes this book under the inspiration of the Spirit to spare us the bitterness of learning through experience that nothing under the sun really satisfies the human heart apart from God. This small book in the Old Testament gives us undeniable evidence of our need for a Savior in order to provide us a purpose for living on earth. Without Jesus Christ, and the mission for which he left us to accomplish, we also would be living empty lives without any meaning, as Solomon so eloquently describes for us in this book.

Jeremiah 2:13 says, "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." From this verse we learn three things about people in general:

1. They are empty (they have no God),
2. They are stubborn (determined to be filled with something), and
3. They will ultimately be disappointed (because they cannot be filled).

Ecclesiastes is a book written about things that will not satisfy that men still continually seek after (see John 4:13): wisdom (1:16-18), pleasure (2:1-3), superiority (2:15), hard work/labor (2:19-21), alcohol (2:3), possessions (2:4-6), power (2:7), money (2:8-9, 5:10-11), and music (2:8), just to name a few.

Thankfully, Jesus came to meet our every need and to give us an eternal purpose for our lives here on earth. I Corinthians 15:58 says... "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Solomon was correct in concluding that all is vanity under the sun, but our labor is not in vain in the Lord!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As THE SON OF DAVID – Eccl. 1:1. (Matt. 1:1— Jesus Christ is the Son of David)

DAY 148

TODAY'S READING: ECCLESIASTES 7-12

OVERVIEW:

The vanity of wisdom apart from God (chapter 7); the vanity of hoping in government (chapter 8); the vanity of life's unfairness (chapter 9); the vanity of foolish living (chapter 10); the vanity of selfish living (chapter 11); the vanity of forgetting God (chapter 12); and Solomon's conclusion of the whole matter.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

While we are commanded by God to incline our ears unto wisdom (Prov. 2:2), we will be without fulfillment if it is done apart from God. You can't pursue wisdom (Eccl. 7:23). You have to pursue God, and by pursuing God you get wisdom!

Chapter 8 deals with the vanity of hoping in government or politics to make everlasting change. As believers, if we are going to change the world, it will be done by changing one heart at a time with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The laws of government or the policies of politicians can only change behavior. God is into changing hearts and lives forever. Read Psalm 19 to remind you of the power of God and His Word. No law on earth is perfect, but God's Law is just that...perfect (Psalm 19:7). No judgment on earth is true and righteous altogether, but God's judgments are (Psalm 19:9). Place your hope in God and the gospel, not the government!

Some interesting observations from chapter 8:

1. Verse 4 states that "Where the word of a king is, there is power." Is it mere coincidence that God's Word for English speaking people is preserved for us in what is commonly called the KING James version? It is one powerful Book!
2. Verse 11 states that "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil". This verse is a perfect explanation as to why the death penalty here in America is not the effective deterrent to crime that it should be (the average wait on death row is over 10 years!). The more practical application to this verse though for a believer would have to do with training our children. Have you found yourself as a father or mother telling your kids to do or not to do something more than once before the command is obeyed? The Bible is clear as to what we as parents should be doing to train our children before we get to the point of frustration and anger because of their disobedience. Parents need to be consistent and biblical in their discipline of their children so that their hearts are not "fully set in them to do evil".

Chapter 12 is a description of old age and the dying process:

- Verse 1 – old age is a burden
- Verse 2 – one health crisis after another
- Verse 3a – you start to shake
- Verse 3b – the bowing of the back
- Verse 3c – your teeth are few
- Verse 3d – eyesight is dimmed
- Verse 4a – hearing is fading

Verse 4b – anything wakes you up
Verse 4c – voice is weakened
Verse 5a – difficult walking up steps
Verse 5b – everything causes fear
Verse 5c – no drive for life/sex
Verse 7 – then you die and your spirit returns to God who gave it.

In light of all he experienced under the sun, Solomon concludes that it all comes down to this...“fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As THE POOR WISE MAN – Eccl. 9:14-16; II Corinthians 8:9 tells us that Jesus Christ became poor to be able to deliver us.

As THE CREATOR – Eccl. 12:1; see John 1:1-3,14.

DAY 149

TODAY'S READING: SONG OF SOLOMON 1-8

OVERVIEW:

The song of all songs that describes the love between a man and a woman; this is one of 1005 songs written by Solomon (I Kings 4:32).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

This is a love story that involves three main characters: a lovely maiden, who was forced to work by her selfish family (1:5-6, 2:15); her beloved, a man who had won her heart, who also happened to be a shepherd (1:7); and King Solomon, who is known for his attraction to beautiful women (I Kings 11:3).

While on one of his trips to survey his lands, Solomon meets this lovely maiden and takes her to his palace. There she can think only of her beloved back home (see chapters 1 & 2). She tells the other women (the “daughters of Jerusalem” – 2:7, 3:5, 8:4) not to try to persuade her to forsake her true love. In 2:8-3:5 she even dreams about her beloved! Solomon visits her to try to win her love but it is to no avail, because she cannot forget about her true love back home (3:6-4:16). Her beloved then has a dream about her (5:1-6:3). Once again, King Solomon tries to win her love, but just as before, she refuses (6:4-7:9). She is not impressed with the King's wealth, spices, lands, or flattery. Finally, true love wins out and the maiden is set free. She flees to her beloved and is restored to her family again (8:4-14).

In this story, Solomon is a picture or type of the world that tries anything and everything to lure the believer away from the beloved Shepherd! We, as believers are the bride of Christ and should not allow anything in this world come between us and the love we have for our Savior! We are commanded by God to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30), and to not love this world at all (James 4:4; I John 2:15)! Let's remember daily, the love that our beloved Savior showed us, so we can return that same love to Him.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As THE SHEPHERD – Song of Solomon 1:7. (Jesus is the Shepherd of our souls – I Peter 2:25).

As THE BELOVED – Song of Solomon 1:14, 2:8, and 8:5; see Matthew 3:17 and 12:18.

DAY 150 – FRIDAY, JULY 29, 2005

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH

The Book of Isaiah is one of the most intriguing Books of the Entire Bible. There are either some very strange “coincidences” found in this Book, or some very incredible things God reveals to us through it!

Is it mere coincidence that the Bible is comprised of 66 Books and that the Book of Isaiah is comprised of 66 chapters?

Is it mere coincidence that chapter one of Isaiah begins, as does Genesis, talking about the “heavens” and the “earth” (Gen. 1:1 c.f. Isa. 1:2).

Is it mere coincidence that chapter 40 of Isaiah, corresponding to the 40th Book of the Bible, or the first book of the New Testament, talks about, “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God,” just as does the Book of Matthew (Isa. 40:3 c.f. Matt 3:1-3)?

Is it mere coincidence that Isaiah 66 (corresponding, of course, to the last Book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation) talks about the new heaven and the new earth, just as the Bible does in Revelation 21 (Isaiah 66:22 c.c. Rev. 21:17)?

Is it mere coincidence that the first 39 chapters of Isaiah (i.e. representative of the Old Testament) is so different in content from the last 27 chapters (i.e. representative of the New Testament), that many have insisted that there are actually two Isaiahs that authored this Book? The first 39 chapters, coincidentally enough, point to man’s tremendous need for salvation, and the last 27 chapters point to God’s gracious provision of it!

Obviously, we’re not dealing here with mere coincidences! The Book of Isaiah is actually a microcosm of the Bible. If you are unfamiliar with the term “microcosm,” it is a miniature, a representation of the whole. We could say that New York City is a microcosm of the world, or the capstone of a pyramid is a microcosm of the pyramid itself.

The Book of Isaiah begins the Books of the Bible referred to as “the Prophets.” Of course, the Prophets are divided into two main categories or headings, the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. What determines the distinction is not the significance of their content, but very simply the amount (or length) of their content.

The theme of Isaiah is the same as in all of the Prophetic Books, “the day of the Lord,” or the second coming of Christ. Regardless of the situations that Israel was facing, regardless of the sins that Israel was committing, regardless of the subject on which the prophet was preaching, the theme in the Prophetic Books always goes to be the same. It always ends and/or is pointing to the Day of the Lord.

The time of Isaiah’s prophecy is approximately 814 to 769 B.C., and takes place during the last half of the Book of II Kings, chapters 16 through 25. Primarily, Isaiah writes to the two southern tribes.

TODAY’S READING: ISAIAH 1-6

OVERVIEW:

Israel’s backslidden condition; Isaiah’s exhortation for repentance; the coming of Christ’s kingdom; Jerusalem’s glorious future; God’s judgment upon sinners; Isaiah’s vision of God’s holiness.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Israel’s spiritual condition in chapter one is a familiar in Israel’s history. Once again, they have allowed themselves to spiral downward into apostasy. Isaiah uses seven different terms in verse 4 to describe their backslidden state: 1) sinful; 2) laden with iniquity; 3) evildoers; 4) corrupters; 5) forsaken the Lord; 6) provoked the Holy One; 7) gone away backward. The pitiful thing about it is that though those terms were descriptive of their true spiritual condition, it did not stop them from going through the motions of all kinds of activity that made them think they were doing okay spiritually. They continued all of their religious observances – the feasts, sacrifices, new moons and sabbaths long after they had any meaning in their hearts or bearing on their lives. God says to Israel through Isaiah, “I’m sick of all of your religiousness! Don’t bring me any more of your vain oblations! I can’t stand it! You’re wearing me out with all of this stuff you’re doing! I’m going to close my eyes so I don’t have to see any more of your hypocrisies! When you lift up your hands in prayer, all I see is all of the sinful things you’ve been doing with them! Spare Me!”

It is quite interesting how much this passage in Isaiah 1 mirrors the letter our Lord wrote to the Laodiceans in Rev. 3:14-22, describing the spiritual condition of His church in our day. God’s people come to church in Laodicea looking the part, they participate faithfully in the offering, they stand and sing the songs, they take copious notes, they nod their head in all of the right places, and yet their heart is not in it, and somehow all of these things they do on Sundays has little, if any, bearing on what will take place in their lives Monday through Saturday!

God’s answer in Isaiah’s day, just as it is now, is “Get your heart right! And then, get your heart into it!” “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come

now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isa. 1:16-20). The parallel passages in the New Testament are numerous: II Cor. 6:14-18; II Cor. 7:1;

Notice a key phrase in Isaiah 1:19; "If ye be willing AND obedient." Perhaps the key word in this phrase is the word "AND." Laodicean churches are filled with "WILLING" people. They're willing to serve in a children's class; they're WILLING to be involved as a cleaning servant of the facilities; they're WILLING to offer the Lord a gift of love upon the first day of the week; they're WILLING to do any number of things! The only problem is, they just seldom DO! Willing? Yes! Obedient? No!

On the other hand, Laodicea is filled with "OBEDIENT" people. They would never think about not obeying Hebrews 10:25 by missing a service; they would never not obey I Cor. 16:2 by not participating in the offering; they would never miss filling out a study sheet during the message on Sunday morning; they would never not DO a lot of things! The only problem is, their obedience is strictly a matter of duty. It is ritualistic, legalistic, hypocritical, and the result of self-disciplining and suppressing their real desires, and "cranking out" spiritual-looking activity, rather than the joyous, passionate, heart-felt, Spirit-led response of a WILLING heart. May we surrender ourselves to be "WILLING AND OBEDIENT"!

As we start down the path of the "Prophets," I would challenge you to underline every specific reference to "the day of the Lord" (the Tribulation/Second Coming of Christ/the Millennium). I'll list the ones I see each day, but it'll be a whole lot more fun if you underline them as you find them yourself first. By doing this, you'll understand in a whole new way why we say that "the day of the Lord" is the theme of the Bible!

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

- 2:2 – "And it shall come to pass in the last days"
- 2:11 – "in that day"
- 2:12 – "For the day of the Lord"
- 2:17 – "in that day"
- 2:19 – "when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth"
- 2:20 – "in that day"
- 2:21 – "when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth"
- 3:7 – "in that day"
- 3:18 – "in that day"
- 4:1 – "in that day"
- 4:2 – "in that day"
- 5:30 – "in that day"

For practical reminders of how Isaiah 6 implies to us, go back and re-read the Memory Verse explanation for Week #23, on Day 111, Monday, June 6th.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE WHO WILL JUDGE THE NATIONS – Isa. 2:2-4 (The Lord Jesus Christ... shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing – II Tim. 4:1).

As the BRANCH OF THE LORD, BEAUTIFUL AND GLORIOUS – Isa. 4:2 (Zech. 3:8; 6:12; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Isa. 11:1).