

# How God Views Religion

Amos 4:1-5:17



# Problematic Worship - Bethel

- The Israelites believed that God was pleased with their religious expressions.
- In Amos' day, religion was focused in three locations:
  - Bethel
  - Gilgal
  - Beersheba
- Bethel was associated with the patriarch Jacob.
- As Jacob was fleeing from Esau, he had a dream in which he saw angels ascending and descending on a ladder that reached to heaven.
- Jacob called the place where he had the dream "Bethel," which means "house of God."
- God's people came to believe that Bethel was a place of worship.
- This was not the kind of worship that God prescribed.

# Problematic Worship - Gilgal

- When the people of God left Egypt and finally entered the Promised Land, the first place at which they stopped was Gilgal.
- The Israelites erected a monument to their crossing and consecrated themselves as God's covenant people.
- All the males were circumcised there.
- It was at Gilgal that the manna that God had given them stopped.
- The people superstitiously worshiped God at Gilgal.
- Religion without reality means nothing.

# Problematic Worship - Beersheba

- Apparently, the people of God used to make pilgrimages to Beersheba.
- Beersheba figured prominently in the lives of the three great patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- Each patriarch found himself, at some point in his life, at Beersheba where God spoke to them.
- Amos told the people that God will not meet with them in their self-styled worship.
- God sent many warnings to His covenant people as He wanted them to repent and return to Him.
- Every so-called “natural disaster” must be seen as God warning His covenant people to examine their worship.

# Conclusion

- God wants His people to seek Him.
- God wants His people to have a vital relationship with Him.
- God wants His people to submit to Him and His Word.
- God wants His people to do what He says in His Word.
- God does not want His people to decide what they think will be a nice way to worship Him.
- We think God should be pleased with how we would like to worship Him.
- Let us worship the Lord in the way He prescribes.