

The purpose of this publication is to spread the truth, to sow God's good seed, the Word of God, and to confront religious error for the good of men's souls. Editor: Allen Dvorak

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461 Kelly Spring Road - Harvest, AL 35749 Telephone: (256) 325-8585

For additional information about us, visit our website
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Can you find all of these places in the WordSearch on page 2?

For extra fun (and who doesn't want "extra fun"?), can you name something that happened at each place? In some cases, the place is connected in some way to a biblical story or first century history.

BETHEL
SHECHEM
NAIN
MASADA
JERICHO
GERGESA
HEBRON
CAPERNAUM
BETHSAIDA
GAZA

DOTHAN
JOPPA
SYCHAR
NAZARETH
TIBERIAS
EMMAUS
MEGIDDO
MAGDALA
BETHLEHEM
JERUSALEM
CAESAREA PHILIPPI
BETHANY
LYDDA
CHORAZIN
ARIMATHEA
TYRE
CAESAREA
CANA
SAMARIA
BEERSHEBA

A devotion to empty ritual does not make us better people nor glorify our Creator. The Pharisees and scribes were devoted to the minutiae of the law, but had definitely lost the point of that law. Jesus said,

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."
-- Matthew 23:23; ESV

We must "die" to the sinful practices of the world and allow Christ to live in us, not only on Sunday, but every day. Paul wrote,

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
-- Galatians 2:20; ESV

Bible Challenge Question - Answer

The three "adversaries" were Hadad the Edomite, Rezon of Damascus and Jeroboam, an Ephraimite (1 Kings 11). As a child, Hadad had escaped to Egypt when Joab was killing all of the males in Edom. When Hadad heard that David and Joab were dead, he returned from Egypt. Rezon had fled from Hadadezer, king of Zobah, but loathed Israel after David defeated Hadadezer (2 Samuel 8, 10). Rezon became king over Syria. Jeroboam was the supervisor of those from the house of Joseph who labored on Solomon's building project in Jerusalem. The prophet Ahijah predicted that Jeroboam would become king over the ten northern tribes. Solomon apparently heard of the prophecy and sought to kill Jeroboam. That would be enough to make me an adversary!



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Useless Religion

By Allen Dvorak

His name means "burden-bearer" and his burden was to preach a message of impending judgment to the people of the northern kingdom of Israel. But Amos wasn't even from the northern tribes; he was from Tekoa, a village about twelve miles south of Jerusalem in the arid region near the Dead Sea.

As he noted about himself, Amos wasn't a prophet in the past, nor the son of a prophet, but rather a shepherd and farmer (1:1; 7:14). And he didn't go by invitation to the northern city of Bethel, a site of idolatrous worship, to prophesy; in fact, his message was so blunt and severe that a local prophet, Amaziah, complained about Amos to the king Jeroboam and told him in no uncertain terms that he needed to "go home" and do his prophesying there (7:10-17)! But the Lord had sent Amos to the north to deliver a message of judgment and preach it he did.

Amos dated his ministry by the reigns of two kings, Uzziah (767-740), king of Judah, and Jeroboam II (782-753), king of Israel. If Amos meant that both kings were reigning at the same time during his prophetic ministry, that time period would be sometime in the years 767-753,

a period of 15 years. Of course, Amos' ministry may not have lasted that long.

Politically and economically, the northern kingdom was at a zenith of power. Spiritually, however, Israel was at low ebb. It was Amos who warned the people of that kingdom to "prepare to meet your God" (4:12). "Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land" (7:17b).

It wasn't that the people had ceased to worship God. In Amos' day, the people of Israel were offering sacrifices of thanksgiving to the Lord, observing the festivals commanded in the Law of Moses, bringing their freewill and peace offerings and their tithes, and filling the temple with songs of praise to Him (Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-23; 8:3, 5).

⁴ "Come to Bethel, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days; ⁵ offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings, publish them; for so you love to do, O people of Israel!" declares the Lord God.

-- Amos 4:4-5; ESV (continued on page 3)

“An optimist sees an opportunity in every calamity; a pessimist sees a calamity in every opportunity.”

-- Winston Churchill

“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”

-- William Ward

B E T H A N Y S P E O M P G L E F R M O
M G T E N C E S Y I S A I A H - 2 9 A F
O Y J Y J M A Z C C G G A Z E E C C S I
J Y B O R U B E T G H D K A B C A A A R
U E Z I P E E B S R N A N U R W P E D S
Z I R Q D P C E Z A M L R H O R E S A V
L N N I W Q A T H R R A C W N H R A R B
Y A N K C S S H P M V E V C X S N R D E
D Z L A U H K S Y E H F A H R H A E E M
D A E D I Y O A H B Y K T O E E U A P M
A R K F C N O I N D D A U R J C M P X A
C E M O A P L D P G S A R A B H M H G U
K T R X N X K A F I Y U Y Z M E E I M S
Z H B B A U X B S A M A R I A M G L Z B
R O K G T I B E R I A S W N M J I I D E
D J E R U S A L E M D O T H A N D P F T
K W P B E T H L E H E M N S R O D P M H
O V G E R G E S A O Z S I G D O O I T E
G Y U L B P B B E E R S H E B A N P P L
A R I M A T H E A Z O F L K I O F Z U J

Can you find the names of 30 biblical places in this WordSearch? The names of these places are on the back page, but try to find all of them before looking at the list. One is highlighted to get you started!

The “Sermon Notes” feature will return in next week’s bulletin.

And yet God was not pleased with them! Why not?

In his preaching Amos identified many of the sins of the people. He criticized the wealthy in particular; the poor were oppressed and cheated by the rich (Amos 4:1; 5:11; 8:4-6); the righteous could not receive justice in the courts of the land (Amos 2:6; 5:12) and the affluent were materialistic (Amos 4:1-3; 6:4-7), that is, concerned only about their material things. Idolatry and sexual immorality were rampant (Amos 4:4; 2:7-8). How could the same people who were worshipping the Lord with sacrifices and religious festivals also commit such acts?

The answer is that the people of Israel had separated their religious service to God from their daily lives. They offered a ritualistic worship to God that was empty of heartfelt allegiance and then immediately returned to the sinful practices of their daily lives (8:4-6). For them, religion was only something to be practiced in

the presence of a priest, on specific days or in a special place. The rest of the time it was a burden and they chaffed at the delay in returning to their violation of God’s commandments regarding justice, righteousness and purity. What was God’s reaction to such conduct?

²¹ “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. ²² Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. ²³ Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. ²⁴ But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

-- Amos 5:21-24; ESV

God desires that we worship Him, but “devotion” to God that does not affect our daily conduct is useless religion. The Bible confirms that God has never been interested in receiving purely ritualistic religion divorced from daily life. We cannot live like a child of the devil from Monday to Saturday and then slip in among the sons of God on Sunday and expect that God will not notice, that He will accept our worship (1 John 3:8-10)! Even the irreligious recognize the inconsistency (hypocrisy?) of those who worship God on Sunday and cheat their clients on Monday, break the law on Tuesday, abuse their children on Wednesday, etc.

(concluded on page 4)

Bible Challenge Question

Because of Solomon’s idolatry, God raised up three adversaries for him. Who were they?

The answer to this question is on the back page.