**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Two Days You Cannot Ignore**

Thank you and good morning! Welcome to Bible Talk

The nation of Israel had been greatly blessed by God. They were God’s chosen people and He had told them that if they would keep His commandments He would bless them. Read Deut. 30:15-18. God did bless Israel, but rather than being grateful, Israel repaid God’s love with rebellion. They worshipped idols and lived wicked lives, just like the nations around them. It is stunning that the nation of Israel would persist in this kind of evil conduct because Israel’s history was replete with evidence that God blesses those who obey and punishes those who disobey. And even when they forgot about their God and His judgments, they received warning after warning from the prophets whom God sent them, warnings about the consequences of their evil behavior. 2 Kings 17:13 says, *“Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, ‘Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.’”* One of those prophets whom God sent was Amos. Amos told Israel that God’s judgment was coming because of their rebellion. Amos 5:27 says, *“‘Therefore I will send you into captivity beyond Damascus,’ Says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.”* Israel knew the score. God told them exactly what was coming. But how do they respond? Look at Amos 6:3, *“Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, Who cause the seat of violence to come near.”* Notice, they “put far off the day of doom.” They put from their minds any thought of God’s judgment and punishment. They just didn’t want to think about things like that. But putting away those thoughts allowed them to bring near the seat of violence. It allowed them to give themselves over to evil. But here’s the point, just because they chose not to think about the coming day of calamity, didn’t mean that day wasn’t coming. It was a little more than thirty years from this time that they saw the approaching Assyrian army sent by God to judge Israel because of their evil. They tried to put thoughts of the coming day of God’s judgment far from their minds, but it still came and they suffered terribly for their evil.

We look back on this scene and are amazed at their foolishness. How could they not listen to the warning in the law God had given them long ago; how could they not heed the warnings of the prophets sent by God? We would like to believe that, had we been in their sandals, we would have made a different choice...or would we? The sad reality is that there are far too many people who make exactly the same mistake Israel made long ago. Just like Israel in Old Testament times, God tries to warn us about the devastating consequences of rejecting Him and His will for our lives. But sadly, sometimes we do exactly what Israel did. We put that day out of our minds. We simple choose not to think about it. Believing that somehow we will not be held accountable for our choices, we bring near to ourselves the evil things that this world offers. Of course, we already know from Israel’s story why this decision is foolish. We may put thoughts of judgment, God’s wrath and accountability far from our minds, but that does not mean that day isn’t coming. That day is coming and when it does, it will be a catastrophe for everyone who chose to put this day out of their minds.

The lesson today is to encourage us to reverse the process of Israel’s choice and do the opposite of what they did.

First that means we must bring near what they put far off. Israel putt off the “day of doom.” Again, the idea is they put out of their minds any thought of being held accountable for their evil deeds or God’s coming judgment on the nation. We can’t afford to make that mistake, that is, not to think about what’s coming in our future. I say that because every person is facing two critical days in their future. What are these two days? They are the day of our death, and the day of the second coming of Christ. Hebrews 9:27-28 says, *“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”* Notice, the Hebrew writer mentions our death and Jesus appearing the second time.

First there is the day of our death. Physical death is when the spirit of man departs the body. James 2:26 says, “*the body without the spirit is dead.”* The body goes back to the earth as it was and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Eccl. 12:7). We do not cease to exist at death. Our spirits continue somewhere. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus that Jesus tells, recorded in Luke 16:19-31, we learn that when the righteous die they go to a place of comfort. When the wicked die they go to a place of torment. We also learn from this story that after death there is no second chance for the wicked to repent and be saved. The day of our death will mark the end of our opportunity to prepare for what is to come after this life.

Secondly, the Hebrew writer mentions Jesus’ second coming. Jesus talks about His coming in Matthew 25:31-46. When He comes He will separate the nations as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Verse 34 says, *“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”* Verse 41, *“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”* He says in verse 46, *“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”* Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:10, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”* This is the day of judgment and we will all be there. What happens on this day will determine where I will spend eternity.

And yet most people in the world go through their day (every day) with no thought of these two profound realities. In fact most people do everything they can to put thoughts of death and judgment as far from their minds as possible. Now if these two days are as critical as the Bible describes them, why would anyone try to put them out of their mind? The answer is simple. People don’t think about these days because they find them terrifying. They feel this way because they know they are not ready to face them. But oddly enough, rather than getting ready, they just try not to think about these critical days that are coming. It’s like people who use their credit card to go on a spending spree. They just behave like the bill will never come.

But another reason why they do not want to contemplate these two days is it allows them to behave irresponsibly. When I choose to put thoughts of dying and facing Christ in judgment out of my mind, it helps to alleviate the guilt and fear that attaches to the sinful things I am doing. Remember what Amos said about Israel? Not only had they put far off the day of doom, they did something else, they brought near the seat of violence. The two go together. As we put off thoughts of death and judgment, we feel a little more comfortable with our sin.

But there is one fundamental problem with this approach to life. Our choice to deny reality does not change reality. I may let myself spend money without any thought of what happens when the bill comes due – but the bill is still coming. Likewise, we may live our lives like we will never die and answer for our lives on judgment day, but those days are coming. It is not difficult to see how absurd it is to try to ignore these two most important days.

But there is another option – a better one. Rather than putting them far from our minds, we need to bring them near, put them in the very forefront of our minds and think about them all the time. Everyday we need to think, “this could be my last day on earth.” We need to think this way because it provokes needed changes in our lives. After Peter mentions that *“the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up,”* he then says, *“Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.”* (2 Peter 3:10-11) Thinking about the day of judgment motivates proper behavior.

This brings up the second thing we must do to reverse the destructive process we find in Amos 6:3, we must put off what they brought near. It was Israel’s choice to put off the day of doom that allowed them to bring near the seat of violence. They put thoughts of judgment and punishment far from their minds so they could do evil with less fear. We need to do exactly the opposite. We should put evil deeds far from us because we bring near the thoughts of death and judgment. Let me say it this way, it is really hard to go about my day acknowledging that this could be my last, and at the same time go out and get drunk with my friends. It is hard to live life with the coming of Jesus in the forefront of my mind, and then cheat on my wife.

We need to make the choice that Israel did not make. We need to bring near those days that are coming, death and judgment, and allow those thoughts push far from us all the evil things that tempt us.

There is a wonderful up-side that comes with this choice. When we commit our lives to Christ, God forgives us of our sins, and as we choose to serve the Lord daily, repenting of any sins we commit, we are forgiven and we are ready to meet the Lord in judgment. We then can say as Paul said, *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* (Phil. 1:21) We can say as Peter said, *“looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?”* (2 Peter 3:12) We will then eagerly wait for that day. Wouldn’t that be nice – to think about the end, the Lord’s coming, judgment day, and be eager for it, rather than be afraid of it?

To have it that way we must put sin far from us and draw near to God. Are you ready to do that? If you have never made the decision to put away sin and draw near to God, Jesus died so you could do just that. Why not come to Him today. Believe in Him, repent of your sins, confess your faith in Christ and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, as Jesus commanded. He will then save you. What can this world offer that is worth continuing to live in fear…and worse to leave you unprepared when the Lord comes?

Our time is gone for today.

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