

# Amos 2:4-5

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-2/amos-24-5/>

*The LORD pronounces judgment on the inhabitants of Judah because they rejected His covenantal laws and did not keep His statutes.*

God's pronouncement of judgment now reached His own people, the southern kingdom of Judah. The LORD said, *For three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke its punishment.* Like the surrounding pagan nations, Judah had committed offenses that deserved *punishment*. But unlike the pagan nations, Judah (and Israel) had a covenant relationship with the LORD. The Judeans (like the Israelites) were the covenant people of God and had agreed to live by His covenantal laws. Yet *they rejected the law of the LORD and had not kept His statutes*, although the consequences for breaking God's covenant were spelled out plainly

The *law of the LORD* refers to the teaching or covenant stipulations by which the Judeans (and the Israelites) were supposed to live to please their covenant partner, Yahweh. The word *statutes* is here used synonymously with the word *law*. Such stipulations are recorded in the Pentateuch, that is, the first five books of Moses (especially, from Exodus to Deuteronomy). God gave His laws to His chosen people so that they might learn to fear Him and obey His commandments (Deuteronomy 4:10; 5:29; 6:2). The people had agreed to abide by God's covenant, which followed the pattern of the ancient suzerain vassal treaties. In these treaties, the suzerain, or superior ruler, promised blessings for loyalty and obedience, and cursings for rebellion. The people had agreed to enter into this covenant with God, and abide by its provisions.

However, many times Judah rejected God's law, which they had promised to keep (Exodus 24:7). When they did this, they rejected the truth which would enable them to live righteously (Psalms 19:9). They rejected the Ten Commandments' culture of service to others, respect for others, and loving one's neighbor. Instead they followed the pagan culture of exploitation of others. As the LORD said, *Their lies also have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked.* Judah decided to follow false prophets who uttered *lies* to deceive them, instead of following God's laws as given by His true prophets. As such, they had done just as their ancestors did.

Therefore, the LORD said that He would *send fire upon Judah*, which would *consume the citadels (fortresses) of Jerusalem*. The term *Jerusalem* means "possession of peace." Jerusalem, the chief city of ancient Palestine and of the modern state of Israel, rises to just over 2500 feet above sea level and rests some 14 miles west of the northern end of the Dead Sea, which is about 1400 feet below sea level. It is approximately 33 miles east of the Mediterranean coast. It is called "the holy city" in Isaiah 52:1.

Throughout history, *Jerusalem* and *Judah* suffered from many attacks. In 586 BC, the Babylonians destroyed the temple along with the city and its walls and deported the Jews to Babylon (2 Kings 24–25). When Cyrus the Great allowed the people of God to return to Jerusalem, the people began rebuilding the temple, a project that was completed in 516 BC under

Zerubbabel (Ezra 6). Under Nehemiah's leadership the people were able to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in 444 BC (Nehemiah 6).

During the roughly 400 year intertestamental period, between the writing of the last book of the Old Testament and the advent of Jesus, the Seleucid king Antiochus IV (175–163 BC) destroyed the temple and executed many Jews. A few years later Judas the Maccabee—the leader of the Maccabean revolt (167–134 BC) against the Seleucid empire—liberated Jerusalem, and the Jews were able to restore the temple. In 63 BC, the Romans besieged and took the city, making Judah part of the Roman empire. In 40 BC, Caesar Augustus made Herod the Great king over Judah. In 20 BC, Herod began renovating the Jewish temple that had been built in the sixth century. That renovation project was completed in AD 66. The Romans subsequently destroyed the temple in AD 70, as a part of their crushing of Jewish zealots during the Jewish Wars (67-73 AD). This persecution resulted in a massive dispersion of the Jews throughout the world.

Nevertheless, the Bible predicts that one day the Jews will return to their homeland. The Jerusalem temple, which was destroyed by the Romans, will be rebuilt. In those days and at that time, the LORD “will restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem” (Joel 3:1).

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>4</sup> Thus says the Lord,  
“For three transgressions of Judah and for four  
I will not revoke its *punishment*,  
Because they rejected the law of the Lord  
And have not kept His statutes;  
Their lies also have led them astray,  
Those after which their fathers walked.  
<sup>5</sup> “So I will send fire upon Judah  
And it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem.”**