

Without Justice Comes Judgment

Amos 1-2

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Introduction: Even with rising gas prices, increased home energy costs, & double-digit inflation, we Americans still enjoy the highest living standard of any country in the world. We live in relative peace & safety, without threat of invasion or persecution. When Amos wrote his prophecy around 765 B.C., both Judah (the Southern Kingdom) & Israel (the Northern Kingdom) were enjoying a time of great prosperity & seeming security. “Luxury abounded (3:10-15; 5:1-6), & ‘religion’ was popular. Israel flocked to the royal chapel at Bethel (4:4-5), & Judah celebrated the feasts enthusiastically (5:21-22), but the sins of both nations were eroding the religious & moral fiber of the people” (Wiersbe). See any parallels to our society today? Now notice how Amos begins his ministry. He starts by denouncing the sins of nations surrounding Israel. Not until 2:4ff does he begin preaching against the sins of Judah & Israel. But let’s start with a brief introduction to this Book of Amos. By his own admission, he was “*no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman (of cattle?), & a gatherer of sycamore fruit*” (7:14). “So God chose Amos & although he was only a poor workingman, he had a great view of God” (Phillips). Is this not hope & encouragement for us? We need not be highly educated or theologically trained to proclaim: “*Thus saith the LORD.*” Amos is from the Southern Kingdom of Judah (“*Tekoa*”) & is writing somewhere between the years 765-750 B.C. He dates his prophecy during the reigns of Uzziah (Judah) & Jeroboam (Israel), “*two years before the earthquake*” (cf. Zech. 14:5). His theme is that without justice comes judgment. Consider with me this morning the preaching of Amos against the sins of nations surrounding Israel, his preaching against the sins of Judah & Israel, & then the preaching against our sins.

I. The preaching of Amos against the sins of surrounding nations (1:1-2:3)

A. Damascus (capital of Syria):

[Note the repeated formula, “*for 3 transgressions of _____, & for 4, I will not turn away the punishment thereof.*” It speaks of repeated sins & indicates those “ripe” for judgment (3 + 4 = 7 – the complete number?).]

1. The charge (:3) > they used iron threshing equipment to torture & kill captured Jews (see II Kings 8:12, prophecy of Elisha).
2. The consequence (:4-5) > the Syrians would be conquered by the Assyrians (into captivity).

B. Gaza (representative of Philistia):

1. The charge (:6) > their assault on Israel resulted in men, women, & children sold into slavery; they were delivered over to Edom (cf. II Chronicles. 21:16-17).
2. The consequence (:7-8) > Philistia would be destroyed, the population decimated.

C. Tyrus (Tyre, representative of Phoenicia):

1. The charge (:9) > they sold their Jewish captives also to Edom (like Philistia, slave traders).
2. The consequence (:10) > Tyre would be burned, first by Nebuchadnezzar & later by Alexander the Great (the island city).

D. Edom:

[Note the next 3 nations are “kin” to Israel; Edomites descended from Esau, Jacob’s twin-brother.]

1. The charge (:11) > their cruelty by torture & oppression as well as aiding Israel’s enemies.
2. The consequence (:12) > the cities of Teman & Bozrah destroyed (non-existent today).

E. Ammon:

[Note Ammon & Moab were descendants of Lot, Abrahams’ nephew.]

1. The charge (:13) > they killed not only the men of Israel, but women (even with child) & children (cf. the brutality in Ukraine today).
2. The consequence (:14-15) > The capital city of Rabbah to be destroyed (cf. Ezk 25:1-7).

F. Moab:

1. The charge (2:1) > their disrespect for the dead, particularly royalty (see Wiersbe, 346).
2. The consequence (2:2-3) > the king & his officials would be killed.

Observation: Imagine Israel saying to Amos at this point: “Preach It, Amos!”

Summary: “God expected these Gentile nations to listen to a Jewish prophet & heed what he said!

Though not under Mosaic Law, these nations were responsible to God for what they did; & responsibility brings accountability. God is still on the throne & will punish evildoers in His good time” (Wiersbe).

II. The preaching of Amos against the sins of Judah & Israel (2:4-16)

A. Judah (the Southern Kingdom):

1. The charges (:4) >
 - a. Their rejection of the law of God.
 - b. Their reliance upon their own lies (cf. *Live Not By Lies*, by Ron Dreher). [see Phillips, 95]
2. The consequence (:5) > eventual judgment will fall upon the Kingdom & Jerusalem destroyed.

B. Israel (Northern Kingdom):

1. The charges (:6-12) >
 - a. Injustice (:6) – oppression of the poor.
 - b. Immorality (:7) – a father & son resorting to the same harlot (“maid” – servant?).
 - c. Idolatry (8) – “*house of their god.*”
 - d. Ingratitude (:9-12) – forgetting that God had delivered them from Egypt (:10), cared for them in the wilderness (:10), destroyed their enemies in Canaan (:9), provided them prophets & leaders (:11a).
 - e. Indulgence (4:1) – luxurious, sensual living.
2. The consequence (:13-16) >
 - a. They would be crushed by their own sins (:13).
 - b. They would be conquered by their enemies (:14-16).

III. The preaching of Amos against our sins?

- A. Our indifference > to the Word of God (cf. 2:4). [more on this tonight]
- B. Our injustice > in our treatment of others (“*brotherly love*”?).
- C. Our immorality > lust, pornography, “romance novels.”
- D. Our idolatry > something coming before our worship of God; see I John 5:21. “The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him” (A. W. Tozer).
- E. Our ingratitude > to whom much is given, much shall be required; see Luke 12:48; Rom. 2:17-3:9.
- F. Our indulgence > a lack of self-control; temperance (II Peter 1:6; & cf. Pro. 25:28 & II Cor. 6:19-20 & concern for the body: what I put in it; what I put on it; & what I do with it).

Conclusion: Are we truly grateful to live in a time & place of relative peace & prosperity, & to have a personal relationship to Our Creator through Jesus Christ our Savior? But could we possibly be guilty of indifference to others & insincerity in our worship? Amos decries the spiritual conditions in both Judah & Israel, but he first makes it clear that God will judge even the heathen nations for their evildoing. He is still in control of the rise & fall of all nations (see Acts 17:24-28). Regardless of the outcome of the war between Russia & Ukraine, God will hold all nations accountable in His good time. Could we perhaps use that discussion with our co-workers, friends, or relatives to not only remind them that God is in control (He is Sovereign), but that He will hold us individually accountable for what we do with His Son, Jesus Christ? For believers, we are again reminded that “*judgment must begin at the house of God*” (I Peter 4:17). While it is easy to point our finger at rebellious nations & individuals, what is the Lord Pointing out to us in our lives that demands repentance? Might we pray, “*Search me O God...*”