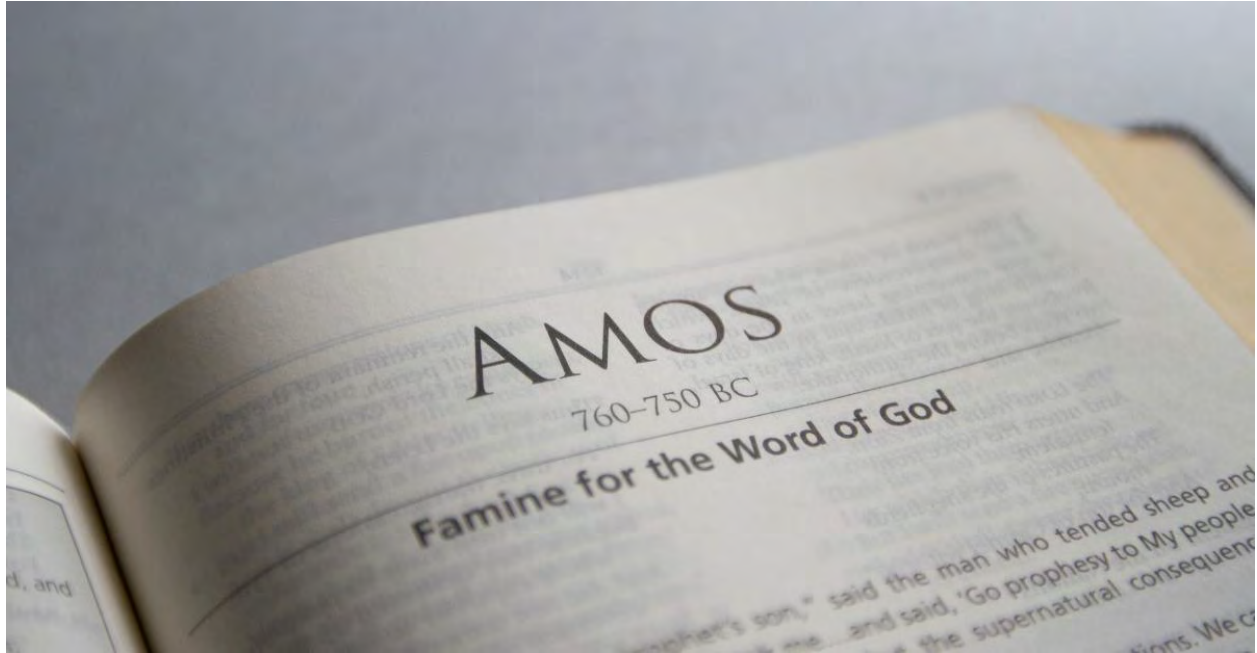


AMOS

INTRODUCTION



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Amos: Introduction
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Amos: Introduction

The book of Amos offers a sweeping scope of God's judgment, centered on Israel, the northern kingdom of the people of God.

We can forget that, while God's patience and forbearance are great, they are not unlimited. Those who continue to sin and will not repent will know His judgment in His way and time. That remains true for today.

Amos might seem a strange candidate for a mission to Israel. But then Israel had silenced all those who were recognized as prophets, so he might have been able to carry out his ministry "under the radar", so to speak, as he was a shepherd and a farmer from Judah.

His message is powerful and timely. Through Amos God advised the nations that His patience had run out and serious consequences were about to ensue. It's a message we need to hear today.

We hope you will find this study of the book of Amos to provide abundant stimulation for your walk with and work for the Lord.

For His glory and praise!

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1 Earthquake

Pray Psalm 29.7-9.

The voice of the LORD divides the flames of fire.
The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
The LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth
And strips the forests bare;
And in His temple everyone says, “Glory!”

Sing Psalm 29.7-9.

(Toulon: [*I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*](#))
God speaks and lightning streaks across the sky;
by His decree He shakes the desert dry.
Speak, LORD, and life to beasts and men is giv’n.
Forests dissolve, and glory rings in heav’n.

Read Amos 1.1, 2; Hosea 4.1-6; meditate on Amos 1.2.

Preparation

1. Who was Amos?
2. To whom did he address his message?

Meditation

We begin our study of the book of Amos with a question: What shall we make of Amos’ reference to “the earthquake”?

That there was a memorable earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, is recalled by Zechariah, long after Uzziah’s day: “You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah” (Zech. 14.5).

Did Amos wait to write his book *after* the earthquake had occurred? That is, did he preach to the people of Israel and Judah *before* the earthquake, but only wrote his messages down two years *after* it happened? Is there another option?

I think there is. Hosea prophesied at the same time as Amos (cf. Hos. 1.1), but he did not mention an earthquake. Perhaps he didn’t need to. Perhaps he was a *real* prophet, and everybody knew it, unlike Amos, a keeper of flocks from a two-bit village in Israel (see Amaziah’s rebuff and Amos’ response in Amos 7.10-17).

Is it possible that Amos was foretelling the earthquake, so that, when it happened, his words would be vindicated? We don’t know. But the words this unlikely prophet brought to the people of God warned them that the earth was about to quake under their feet because the wrath of God had reached a boiling point with these wicked, ungrateful people.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

As we happily hum a few bars of “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”, let us consider His earthquakes, weather, anger, and power—used to show His sovereignty, His majesty, His glory and His use of the same against wickedness—and for righteousness and forgiveness.

“Hear attentively the thunder of His voice, and the rumbling that comes from His mouth.

He sends it forth under the whole heaven, His lightning to the ends of the earth...

God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend ...snow...gentle rain...heavy rain...whirlwind...scattering winds...ice...

they do whatever He commands them on the face of the whole earth.

He causes it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy” (Job 37.2-13).

“Indeed, the LORD will throw you away violently, O mighty man, and will surely seize you.

He will surely turn violently and toss you like a ball into a large country; there you shall die...” (Is. 22.17, 18)

“The mountains saw You and trembled...” (Hab. 3.10).

“Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken, because He was angry” (Ps. 18.7).

“The waters saw You, O God; the waters saw You, they were afraid; the depths also trembled.

The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound; Your arrows also flashed about.

The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; the lightnings lit up the world;

The earth trembled and shook” (Ps. 77.16-18).

“He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes;

He casts out His hail like morsels; who can stand before His cold?” (Ps. 147.16, 17).

“Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split...” (Matt. 27.51).

“And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow” (Matt. 28.2, 3).

Every small scrap, every jot and tittle, every leaf and blade of grass, the majestic heavens, the fruitful earth, all the aspects of weather speak of God—His Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience—and declare His glory through the earth to the end of the world (Ps. 19.1-4).

We will do well to listen to the earthquake, the still small voice (1 Ki. 19.11, 12), and the humble words of a sheepbreeder from Tekoa (Amos 1.1).

Reflection

1. Is Amos’ mention of an earthquake here a kind of literary device? Does it create any kind of mood or expectation in you?

2. God often uses the humble, the unlikely, and the looked-down-upon to carry His message. How can you see that in Amos’ pedigree? How about in yours?

3. God sent Amos to the people of Israel. To whom is He sending you today?

Amos, by saying that he was a shepherd, pours contempt on the pride of the king of Israel, and of the whole people; for as they had not deigned to hear the Prophets of God, a keeper of sheep was sent to them. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Amos 1.1

Pray Psalm 29.1-6, 10, 11.

Rejoice and give praise to God for His sovereign rule over all things. Seek His blessings and strength for the day ahead, and thank Him for His peace.

Sing Psalm 29.1-6, 10, 11.

(Toulon: [*I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*](#))

Give praise to God, you children of the earth!
Tell of His strength, proclaim His glorious worth!
Give to the LORD the glory due His Name!
Worship in holiness; His grace proclaim!

Over the waters, over thunder's roll,
God's voice creation's mighty pow'rs controls!
Cedars collapse at His majestic Word;
nations are shaken by our mighty LORD!

Sovereign, the LORD sat o'er the raging flood;
Sovereign forever rules our gracious God!
God will His people bless with strength and peace:
LORD, may Your holy Word to us increase!

2 Israel's Great Sin

Opening Prayer: Psalm 87.1, 2

His foundation *is* in the holy mountains.
The LORD loves the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.
Glorious things are spoken of you,
O city of God!

Sing Psalm 87.1, 2

(St. Anne: [*Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*](#))

Upon the holy mountains rest the footings of the Lord,
Who loves of Israel's flock the best the keepers of His Word.

Read Amos 1.1, 2; 2 Kings 14.23-28; meditate on 2 Kings 14.23, 24.

Preparation

1. What did Jeroboam II continue?

2. How did God use him?

Meditation

As will be immediately clear from the prophecy of Amos, God was not happy with His people, especially those in Israel, the northern kingdom (Judah being the southern).

The judgment promised in Amos was inevitable. Israel—the ten tribes which followed Jeroboam I in rebellion against the Lord (1 Kings 12)—had become increasingly estranged from God and His purposes. Not a single king in Israel followed the way of the Lord. Instead, while giving lip-service to God, they worshiped the false gods from the surrounding nations. Jeroboam II “did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat [Jeroboam I], who had made Israel sin.”

But God bore with His people; He “saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.” Despite the rebellion and sin of the people, God restored their borders and spared them judgment from the Assyrians through the ministry of the prophet Jonah. God had pity on His rebellious people; yet, under the leadership of Jeroboam II, they continued to rebel against Him and to scorn His grace.

But rebellion was not the great sin of Israel.

The great sin of Israel was ingratitude. We must be careful lest that become our great sin as well. Paul taught that we should give thanks in everything (Phil. 4.6, 7; 1 Thess. 5.18). The reason is clear: God is with us in everything, and He will never fail us nor forsake us. But continuing ingratitude—as the in case of Israel—ultimately belies a heart that scorns the Lord (cf. Rom. 1.18-21). This is where Israel had come in the days of Amos, and the consequences would be devastating.

God hates ingratitude. Ingratitude leads to rebellion. Persistent ingratitude reveals a heart of ingratitude, a heart that incurs the displeasure of the Lord.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God,

nor were thankful,

but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened...being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;

who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them” (Rom. 1.20, 21, 29-32).

Preceding the litany of obviously awful behaviors is unthankfulness (aka ingratitude).

We church people are quick to judge the obvious, but slow to oblivate the passive perniciousness of ingratitude towards God persistent in our own lives.

And if we, God’s people, believe His Word to be true, then we must agree with Him that ingratitude is the germ that spreads into all these other things—even if we try to hide it deep in our hearts. But Jesus tells us that those hidden sins are just as evil as the blatant (Matt. 5.19-48).

The antidote? Gratitude, thanks, and appreciation for God’s goodness, grace, forgiveness, and love. “Let us come before His Presence with thanksgiving...for the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods” (Ps. 95.2, 3).

“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.

Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

For the LORD is good;

His mercy is everlasting, and

His truth endures to all generations” (Ps. 100.4, 5).

“God hates ingratitude. Ingratitude leads to rebellion.”

Israel’s great sin does not have to be ours.

Reflection

1. Suppose a fairly new believer asked you how to become a more grateful person. What would you say?
2. When is the best time during the day for you to practice giving thanks to God?
3. What could a fellow believer do to help you give more thanks to God?

Hosea began to prophesy in the reign of this Jeroboam. At the same time Amos prophesied; soon after Micah, then

Isaiab, in the days of Abaz and Hezekiab. Thus God, in the darkest and most degenerate ages of the church, raised up some to be burning and shining lights in it... Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on 2 Kings 14.23-29*

Closing Prayer: Psalm 87.3-7

Thank God for setting His love on you in Jesus Christ, for adopting you into His household, incorporating you into His Church, gifting you with His Spirit, entrusting you with His Word, and giving you each new day to serve Him with gratitude and joy.

Sing Psalm 87.3-7

(St. Anne: [*Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*](#))

For glorious things are spoken of the City of our God;
the nations know His matchless love wher'er His feet have trod.

From south and north, from east and west they come, called by His grace;
thus Zion stands, full strong and blessed, before the Savior's face.

The Lord will count and tally all in Jesus born again;
then let them sing, who on Him call, "We joy in God, Amen!"

3 Deaf Souls

Opening Prayer: Psalm 80.4-7

O LORD God of hosts,
How long will You be angry
Against the prayer of Your people?
You have fed them with the bread of tears,
And given them tears to drink in great measure.
You have made us a strife to our neighbors,
And our enemies laugh among themselves.
Restore us, O God of hosts;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!

Sing Psalm 80.4-7

(St. Theodulph: [All Glory, Laud, and Honor](#))

How long will You ignore all Your people's fervent prayer?
Shall bitter tears fall ever? O Lord, renew Your care!
Our neighbors mock and scorn us, they laugh at our distress;
renew, O Lord, and turn us, look down on us and bless!

Read Amos 1.3-2.16; meditate on Psalm 80.4-7.

Preparation

1. How many nations are listed here?
2. What do they all have in common?

Meditation

It might be helpful to have a [map of Biblical Israel](#) handy. The order of God's pronouncing judgment on the nations is instructive and dramatic.

First is Syria, or Damascus (1.3-5), lying to the northeast of Israel. Next is Philistia (1.6-8), represented by Gaza, Ashdod, and Ashkelon, a historic enemy which was situated to the southwest of Israel. In your mind's eye, draw a line from Damascus to Gaza.

Next in line is the city states of Tyre (1.9, 10), to the north northwest of Israel. Then Edom (1.11, 12), south southeast; draw a line connecting Tyre and Edom. Then Ammon (1.13-15) and Moab (2.1-3), lying east and southeast of Israel, respectively (connect them by a line). Then Judah (2.4, 5), south of Israel. Finally, Israel itself (2.6-16).

Notice—if only in your mind's eye—that all the connecting lines pass through Israel, making almost an “X” through the center and cutting off the extension to the east. Almost like the scope of a marksman's rifle.

God drew a bullseye on His people. Judgment was going to fall all around them as the Assyrians,

forgetting their repentance and commitment to God (book of Jonah), decided to enlarge their influence in the region. Last to know their wrath, following warning after warning, would be Israel.

But the words of God's prophets would fall on deaf souls, which become dead souls under the judgment of the Lord.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

"The treacherous dealer deals treacherously, and the plunderer plunders" (Is. 21.2).

"He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity;
he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword" (Rev. 13.10).
And harpists play their harps (Rev. 14.2).

Threshers thresh. Captivators take captive. Forgetters don't remember. Narcissists lack empathy. Killers kill.

Despisers of the God's law break the commandments. The perverse pervert. And the faux courageous flee (Amos 1.1-2.16). Always. "For three transgressions and for four."

"...be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32.23).

But God has a better way for us. We are to hear and obey Him in all ways. Always.

Let's consider the one idea in Amos 1.6 regarding God's displeasure "because they took captive the whole captivity to deliver them up to Edom." It is never a good idea to put ourselves in the place of God. It is Jesus' job and prerogative to lead captivity captive, not ours.

"You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive...
They have seen Your procession, O God, the procession of my God,
my King, into the sanctuary" (Ps. 68.18, 24).

"Therefore He says:
'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive,
and gave gifts to men'" (Eph. 4.8).

They did not listen carefully to hear what God said. They did not care. They did it their way.

Deaf souls, those folks of Israel.
"The wicked are estranged from the womb;
they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.
Their poison is like the poison of a serpent;
they are like the deaf cobra that stops its ear,
which will not heed the voice of charmers,
charming ever so skillfully" (Ps. 58.3-5).

Per an online article on improving auditory skills, meditation is on the list. Hmmmm.
But even if our outward ears don't perk up, most certainly, meditating on God's word will improve the "hearing" that matters most: That of hearing our Father's voice:

“Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways!” (Ps. 81.13).
“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped” (Is. 35.5).
Jesus said, “The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me” (Matt. 11.5, 6).

Hearers hear. Hear the Word of the LORD!

Reflection

1. How would you explain to a new believer what it means to “hear” the Word of God?
2. Only the Holy Spirit can open the ears of deaf souls. But what is our role in helping them hear the Word of the Lord unto salvation?
3. How will it be evident today that you have heard the Lord?

*[T]he method in dealing with these nations is, in part, the same, yet in each there is something peculiar. In all ages this bitterness has been shown against the Lord's people. When the Lord reckons with his enemies, how tremendous are his judgments! Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Amos 1.1, 2**

Pray Psalm 80.8-19.

Pray for the nations of the world and for the Church, that God will revive and restore His people and bring a great awakening to faith among the peoples of the world.

Sing Psalm 80.8-19

(St. Theodulph: *All Glory, Laud, and Honor*)

You set us free from sin, Lord, and planted us in grace;
we rooted in Your strong Word have spread from place to place.
Our shadow covered mountains, our branches reached the sea;
Your grace flowed like a fountain of life, abundantly.

Now You in wrath have spoken and bruised Your chosen vine.
We languish, Lord, are broken by wrath, deserved, divine.
Once more, Lord, hear our pleading: return and heal this vine!
Look down on us, so needy, and show Your love divine!

Though we be burned and perish because of Your command,
revive us, Lord, and cherish this son of Your Right hand.
Then let us not return to our sinful, selfish ways,
but call on You and learn to surround You with our praise.

4 Threes and Fours

Pray Psalm 2.1, 2.

Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed...

Sing Psalm 2.1, 2.

(Agincourt: [O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High](#))

Why do the nations vainly rage,
conspiring together from age to age?
Earth's kings and all of their couns'lers stand
against the LORD and His Right Hand.

Read and meditate on Amos 1.3, 6, 9, 11, 13, and 2.1, 4, and 6.

Preparation

1. What do these passages have in common?
2. What does this tell us about Judah and Israel?

Meditation

What is the significance of this repeated formula: “For three transgressions...and for four”? I mean, three or four sins? Is that so much to get all worked up about?

Yes. Even one sin is infinitely offensive to God. But that's not what's in focus here.

This formula is a symbol. It says one thing, but it means something more. Let's consider first the numbers—three and four. Three is the number for God in Scripture, and four is the number for man and the earth. Is God saying that the sins of these nations, so many and so continuous, have finally reached like a stench to Him? And is He saying that their sins are the “full cup” of human transgression? As bad as could be?

Alternately, God might be saying, “Three sins plus four sins equal seven sins!” And seven is the number of completion: God has had enough of sinning.

Another possibility is that God is remarking the unrelenting continuity of their sins—one after another after another after another, and no recognition of guilt, no repentance, no letup. These sinners just won't quit!

Finally, as God applies this symbol even to His own people it is made clear that Israel and Judah have lost their distinctiveness, their “set-apartness”. They're no different and no better than these horrible nations all around. The people who were created to be a Kingdom of priests to God have become idolators, adulterers, murderers, thieves, liars, and more, just like the nations they looked

down on and scorned.

To which we can only reply: Uh oh.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him:

A proud look,
A lying tongue,
Hands that shed innocent blood,
A heart that devises wicked plans,
Feet that are swift in running to evil,
A false witness who speaks lies, and
One who sows discord among brethren” (Prov. 6.16-19).

“Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds.
At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand.
They covet fields and take them by violence, also houses, and seize them.
So they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.
Therefore thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, against this family I am devising disaster,
from which you cannot remove your necks; nor shall you walk haughtily, for this is an evil time’”
(Mic. 2.1-3).

“For three transgressions...and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept His commandments. Their lies lead them astray...”
(Amos 2.1, 4, 6).

Three, four, six, seven...numbers, without number, that just compound upon themselves. Sin is that way, too. It hardly happens alone, and rarely comes in singlets. One sin leads to another, and another, ad infinitum. Ad nauseum. “For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You” (Ps. 5.4).

May I suggest that instead of adding we begin subtracting, hearing God say: For four transgressions minus four I will not need to send My punishment; or these seven things subtracted from your life will bring me great pleasure. Furthermore, others will see your good works and glorify Me (Matt. 5.16). They will know that you love Me because you are keeping My commandments instead of despising them (Jn. 14.15). Furthermore, the world will know that we are friends because you are obeying Me (Jn. 15.14). And icing on the cake? The people in your Personal Mission Field will know My love. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments” (1 Jn. 5.2).

We needn't be an abomination of accumulated transgressions as Israel and Judah were. We can be pleasing to God: By adding obedience, and subtracting sin, the order of operations in His economy is fulfilled.

Reflection

1. Sin can snowball in our lives. What keeps that from happening?
2. What's the best *proactive* way to keep sin from lodging in our soul?

3. What do you need from your fellow believers to keep you from snowballing into sin?

*[W]hen God spared not others who had through ignorance sinned, what was to become of the people of Israel, who had been taught in the law? For a servant, knowing his master's will, and doing it not, is worthy of many stripes (Luke 12:47)... John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Amos 2.4, 5**

Pray Psalm 2.10-12.

Pray for our country, the nations of the world, and the Church of the Lord, that we will repent of our sins and seek Him for revival, renewal, and awakening.

Sing Psalm 2.10-12.

(Agincourt: [O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High](#))

Be wise, O kings, O judges, hear,
and tremble with joy, serve the LORD with fear.
Embrace the Son, keep His wrath at bay,
or you shall perish in the way.

His wrath is kindled like a flame
at all who refuse to bow to His Name.
Beware His anger and judgment grim:
How blessed are all who trust in Him!

5 God's Will

Opening Prayer: Psalm 91.1-3

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the LORD, “*He is my refuge and my fortress;*
My God, in Him I will trust.”
Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler
And from the perilous pestilence.

Sing Psalm 91.1-3

(Lauda Anima: [*Praise My Soul the King of Heaven*](#))

All who dwell within God's shelter in His shadow will reside.
He our Tow'r, our Fortress ever, in Him we our trust confide.
From the trapper's snares He saves us; safe from sickness we abide.

Read Amos 1.3-2.16.

Preparation

1. How many times does God say, “I will...”?
2. What does this suggest about the will of God?

Meditation

The writer of the book of Hebrews reminds us that “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10.31). Why would he write such a thing? Isn't it comforting to know that our lives are in God's hands? That we may find refuge and shelter in Him? To know His good and perfect will and to be at peace in it?

Well, yes. Unless, of course, our lives are on a course that the writer describes just prior to this verse: “Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, *'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,'* says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people” (Heb. 10.28-30).

In Amos' day, Israel, Judah, and the nations around them had all rejected the Law of God. God willed that they should obey Him and realize all the blessings and wisdom that come from keeping His Law (cf. Deut. 28.1-14; 4.5-8). He paid them the great benefit of existence and all the daily benefits of grace that entails. They repaid Him with ingratitude and thought they could step out from under His will to “do their own thing”. But they ignored or forgot what God said He will do to those who reject His Law.

We can never safely avoid, escape, ignore, neglect, or defy the will of God. He “works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1.11) and that “all things” includes bringing discipline against His people whenever we, by our disobedience and sin, have “trampled the Son of God

underfoot”. We need only fear what the hands of God might do when we deny His Word and live as we choose. The will of God which He exercised in the book of Amos continues to be part of His will today. And for us, as for them, gratitude and obedience are at the top of His list.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

No one can desire or will themselves to be saved from the “wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1.10). Only God can do that—it is His gift to us and has nothing to do with our good works or wishes (Eph. 2.8, 9).

But there is something we can do after we are saved, and that is to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2.12).

It is an either or, if then, and if when situation. We can choose to arrive in heaven in the same receiving blanket we were born in, or we can enter heaven as mature Christians having daily striven to be more like our dear and precious Savior Jesus Christ. “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 Jn. 3.2, 3). If this is the hope that daily drives our soul, then there will be nothing in this life that we desire more than to be like Him. And this will please our Father in heaven.

We can choose to live in a way that will make it necessary for us to hear: “I will not turn away its punishment...I will send a fire...I will cut off...I will turn My hand against...I will kindle a fire...” (Amos 1.3-2.6).

Or, we can choose by obedience to hear: “But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day” (Deut. 4.20). “A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1 Pet. 2.9, 10).

So, considering that goodness and mercy, let us endeavor to live each moment of every day, that when all is said and done, we can say with Paul:

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4.6-8).

This is God’s “I Will” for us.

Reflection

1. How do you know when you are not in God’s will?
2. What are the best ways to be sure you stay in God’s will?
3. How would you explain to a new believer how to know God’s will and why they should?

[T]he Prophet puts here the Israelites in the same bundle with the Moabites, the Idumeans, and other heathen nations;

as though he said, "God will not spare your neighbors; but think not that ye shall be exempt from his vengeance, when they shall be led to punishment; I now declare to you that God will be the judge of you all together." John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Amos 1.3

Closing Prayer: Psalm 91.4-16

Use this time of prayer to seek the shelter of God's will and the peace and joy of His Presence. Thank Him for the angels He will send to protect you today. Seek His good and perfect will for the day ahead.

Sing Psalm 91.4-16

(Lauda Anima: [*Praise My Soul the King of Heaven*](#))

He will shade us with His pinions, 'neath His wings we safety find.
From night's terror, from day's arrow, from the fears that stalk our mind.
When destruction falls at noon time, safe in Him shall we abide.

Thousands at our sides may falter—it will not to us come near!
We instead shall see the end of all who at God's mercy sneer.
Evil shall no more befall us for we hold the Lord most dear.

He shall give His angels charge to bear us up, lest we should fall;
they will guard and carry all who on the Savior's mercy call.
Cobra, mighty lion, serpent: We shall tread upon them all!

Save us, Lord! We love You only; set us up secure on high!
You we know, on You we call in trouble: Hear us when we cry!
Show us Your salvation, let long life forever satisfy!

6 Concerning Israel

Pray Psalm 52.3-5.

You love evil more than good,
Lying rather than speaking righteousness.

Selah

You love all devouring words,
You deceitful tongue.

God shall likewise destroy you forever;
He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place,
And uproot you from the land of the living.

Selah

Sing Psalm 52.3-5

(Warrington: [*Give to Our God Immortal Praise*](#))

Men more than good in evil delight, and lies prefer to what is right.
They utter words both harsh and strong with their devouring, deceitful tongue.

God will forever break them down, uproot, and cast them to the ground!
He from their safety tears them away, no more to know the light of day.

Read and meditate on Amos 1.1, 2.

Preparation

1. Who is the object of Amos' prophecy?

2. How did Amos describe his prophecy?

Meditation

The people of Israel must have gloated a bit to think of their enemies being overwhelmed and overthrown in the ways Amos described. They would have welcomed Amos' opening words as he prophesied of God's judgment against the surrounding nations. They might even have smiled a bit when Amos prophesied against Judah (Amos 2.4, 5).

But the more thoughtful among them would have heard "concerning Israel" in Amos 1.1, and they might have wondered when that shoe was going to drop. As it turned out, soon.

The book of Amos declares the judgment of God against a wide variety of nations; yet it is ultimately "concerning Israel". All that the people of Israel observed in the nations around them was but preparation for and demonstration of what God was going to do to them.

We must never forget Peter's words: "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4.17). People today are in rebellion against God and increasingly indifferent or hostile to Him, and part of the reason for this is that we have not been faithful in the ministry of grace and the Word entrusted to us.

Let us seek in Amos' words "concerning Israel" the counsel and will of God for us. For Amos was written for our edification, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15.4).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

"...two years before the earthquake" (Amos 1.1).

The Church today needs to listen up. These same words are being launched at us...before Christ's return? Before God's judgment falls on the house of God? Before we die? Before something, for sure.

I can't for the life of me comprehend what Kool-Aid God's people are drinking, because one needs only casually investigate the Scriptures to realize that God's judgment is imminent and devastating.

Thousands of years ago Isaiah wrote of the ecologic and personal disasters in store for those who disobey God's Word. Let us have a look-see and decide for ourselves if this is something we want to participate in:

"Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty and makes it waste,
distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants.

And it shall be: as with the people, so with the priest;

as with the servant, so with his master;

as with the maid, so with her mistress;

as with the buyer, so with the seller;

as with the lender, so with the borrower;

as with the creditor, so with the debtor.

The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, for the LORD has spoken this word.

The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away;

the haughty people of the earth languish.

The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws,
changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate.

Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.

The new wine fails, the vine languishes, all the merry-hearted sigh.

The mirth of the tambourine ceases, the noise of the jubilant ends, the joy of the harp ceases.

They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink is bitter to those who drink it.

The city of confusion is broken down; every house is shut up, so that none may go in.

There is a cry for wine in the streets, all joy is darkened.

The mirth of the land is gone.

In the city desolation is left, and the gate is stricken with destruction" (Is. 24.1-12).

This is the same "earthquake" that David and Paul were burdened to write about, declaring it to be deserved because: "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Ps. 36.1; Rom. 3.18).

But as Solomon encouraged: "by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil" (Prov. 16.6).

However, Jesus said that it isn't just the removal or subtraction of evil that completes us; it is the addition of doing good works that finishes the picture. "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the

kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5.20).

“LORD, I hope for Your salvation, and I do Your commandments” (Ps. 119.166).

If you were offered the life and judgment of mayhem and destruction described by Isaiah and Amos, would you take it?

How about if you were offered an everlasting life of peace, that passes all understanding, along with your heart and mind being guarded by Christ Jesus—would you take that instead?

Concerning Israel, and us, it seems like an obvious choice.

“Two years before the earthquake” ... Wonder why anyone would choose poorly?

Reflection

1. Blessing or judgment? Growth in the Lord or withering on the Vine (Jn. 15.5)? Agents of grace or hoarders of grace? Which do you choose? What will that look like today?

2. Do you think that we as Christians really believe in the judgment or discipline of God? Explain.

3. We don't know what “earthquake” lies ahead. But we know how to prepare for it, whatever it is. Explain.

Amos...lived at the same time as the remarkable Hosea and Joel, and he prophesied the same things about both Assyrians and Babylonians, the return from there and what would happen after the return. After prophesying briefly against the neighboring races initially, he then began the prophecy about Israel. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Amos 1.1, 2

Pray Psalm 52.1, 2, 6-9.

Pray that God will have mercy on our country, our churches, and yourself, and that we will turn from our evil ways and He will revive and renew us again. Give Him thanks and praise for His grace and for Jesus.

Sing Psalm 52.1, 2, 6-9

(Warrington: [*Give to Our God Immortal Praise*](#))

Why do the mighty boast in sin? God's love endures, it knows no end!
They with their tongues vain boasts repeat, and like a razor, work deceit.

The righteous see and laugh and fear, and say, “Behold, what have we here?
Such are all who at God conspire, and wealth and evil ways desire.”

But as for me may I be seen in God an olive ever green!
Ever in God, most kind and just, shall I with joy and gladness trust!

Thanks evermore to our Savior be raised! His faithfulness be ever praised!
Here with Your people, loving God, I wait upon Your Name, so good!

7 Amos Preview

Opening Prayer: Psalm 116.4-6

Then I called upon the name of the LORD:
“O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!”
Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God *is* merciful.
The LORD preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.

Sing Psalm 116.4-6

(Mit Freuden Zart: [All Praise To God Who Reigns Above](#))

I called to God, “O Lord, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!”
The Lord is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.
His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies –
I rest in Him forever!

Read Amos 9.11-15; meditate on verses 11, 12.

Preparation

1. What did God promise to do?
2. Who was to be included in this?

Meditation

Let’s have a quick overview of the message of Amos. The primary recipients of Amos’ prophesy are the people of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II. As we have seen, despite Jeroboam’s scorning the ways of the LORD, God blessed His people, increasing their boundaries and keeping them safe from enemies. But this would not last long.

In chapters 1 and 2 Amos announced that the patience of God had run out. The nations, including Judah but especially Israel, had accumulated a debt of sin of one kind or another, and God was calling them to account.

Chapters 3 and 4 provide more detail concerning the thoroughness of judgment to be wrought against Israel, together with the reasons for God’s wrath. He chose Israel out of all the nations of the world, yet they departed His path and scorned His covenant. God fired several warning shots across Israel’s bow, but they didn’t get the message. They would now.

Chapters 5 and 6 are a call to repentance and a lamentation of woes for all who refuse that call. Three visions relating to the judgment of Israel are next (7.1-9). This is followed by the priest Amaziah’s attempt to discredit Amos, together with the prophet’s response (7.10-17).

Finally (chapters 8 and 9), God determined to send a famine of His Word to the land, leaving them totally alone and without Him, before He then promised to restore His people “in that day”. As with nearly every other prophet of the Old Testament, the wrath of God is not the last Word. His

promise to bless His people endures, but not because of anything in them; only because of His grace.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

We have had a quick overview of Amos' message, now we should look for a moment at Amos, the man.

Per the NKJV book notes his name is derived from the Hebrew root *amas* meaning to lift a burden, or to carry. Thus, his name means Burden or Burden-bearer. And his day job? Sheepbreeder, sheep farming or sheep husbandry—the raising and breeding of domestic sheep. It takes a lot of knowledge, care, and energy to safely keep a lot of sheep. So, Amos was a busy man, with a full-time job, and yet God knew that he could be trusted to convey His message of judgment, repentance, and promise to His people.

Also, per the NKJV notes: “Amos...lashes out at sin unflinchingly, trying to visualize the nearness of God's judgment and mobilize the nation to repentance. The nation, like a basket of rotting fruit, stands ripe for judgment because of its hypocrisy and spiritual indifference.”

Amos was a regular man. A person just like you and me. Called by God to deliver His Gospel message to the people in his Personal Mission Field. God just happened to expand his mission field to all of Judah, Israel, and the Gentiles. But Amos was up to the task. His opening line? “The LORD roars from Zion...” (Amos 1.2).

Besides Jesus, God's precious, perfect, beautiful Son, all man and all God, His other means of spreading the Good News message is to choose regular folks, filled with His Holy Spirit, to convey it.

As Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I AM with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28.18-20).

As we study the book of Amos, we must first hear the message ourselves and repent if we find we are behaving at all like the people of Israel and Judah.

But we should also study this book, keeping in mind that God can use us in the same way he used Amos.

And that we are equally as called to God's work as he was. The same works that God prepared beforehand for him to do, He has also prepared for us to do (Eph. 2.10).

Now that the message and the man have been previewed, all that is left is for us to imitate his willingness to serve the eternal God and King and speak His words of warning and promise to those in our Personal Mission Field. Amos had the time to work God's message into his busy day, and so do we!

Reflection

1. How strong is your sense that God has called you to be His witness and ambassador?
2. What does being the Lord's witness and ambassador require of you?
3. How do you expect to serve in these roles today?

God marvelously preserves his elect amidst the most fearful confusions and miseries. When all seems desperate, he wonderfully revives his church, and blesses her with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. And great shall be the glory

of that period, in which not one good thing promised shall remain unfulfilled. Matthew Henry (1662-1714),
Commentary on Amos 9.11-15

Closing Prayer: Psalm 116.7-19

The Lord has kept His promise. Give Him thanks and praise for the salvation we have in Jesus Christ. Renew your commitment to Him, to know, love, and serve Him all your days.

Sing Psalm 116.7-19

(Mit Freuden Zart: [*All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*](#))

Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.
My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.
Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,
and dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.
What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?
Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love
and pay my vows most truly.

How sweet to Him when saints depart – make me, Your servant, Savior!
From sin You loosed my wand'ring heart; I praise Your Name forever!
On You I call, my vows to pay; here in Your presence I would stay
Your praise to offer ever.

Amos: Introduction

For reflection or discussion

1. What is the significance of God's use of numbers in reporting on the sins of the nations?
2. How does it appear that the primary focus of the book of Amos is judgment against Israel?
3. What was the condition of the Israel at the time of Amos' prophecy?
4. Why was Israel's great sin such a terrible one?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from this introduction to Amos?

For prayer:

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