

# (Amos) the Logic of God's Judgment

by David Guzik

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*The book of Amos is a call to repentance and a reminder of the judgment of God against the nations for their sins.*

**Duration:** 55:18

**Topics:** "Gods Judgment", "Social Justice"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of agreement and its importance in walking together. He uses various examples to illustrate his point, such as a lion roaring when it has no prey and a bird falling into a trap. The preacher then shifts his focus to the sins of the people, particularly the rich who exploit the poor and engage in sexual immorality. He warns that God will send an adversary to bring judgment upon them, including captivity for the children of Israel. Additionally, the preacher highlights the sins of Judah, emphasizing the significance of their transgressions and the punishment they will face.

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## Transcript

Amos chapter 1 verse 1, the words of Amos was among the herdsmen or the sheep breeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. This book of the prophet Amos is the only mention that we have of this man in the entire Old Testament. You won't find any record of this man in 1st and 2nd Kings or in 1st and 2nd Chronicles.

They don't mention him. Some people get confused because it does mention a man with a similar name. Isaiah's father is Amoz, and in some ancient versions it's spelled the same way as Amos, but it's a different word in the Hebrew language.

This is the only place where we know of this man. His name means burden or burden bearer, and since most of the prophecies of Amos concern the coming judgment of God, it's no wonder why God named him burden or burden bearer. He was a man with a burden, speaking to the nation of Israel.

Now God chose him in a very special way. If you notice right here in verse 1, it says that he was among the sheep breeders of Tekoa. It seems as if Amos had no formal theological or prophetic training.

You should know that at this time in Israel's history, and we know this from 1st Kings and from 2nd Kings, that there was what some people call a school of the prophets. That might be sort of an inaccurate

estimation. We don't know exactly if it's fair to call it a school, but at least there was a group known as the sons of the prophets who went around, and Amos makes it very clear that he was not one of this group.

He did not have the training in ministry or the background in these things that many other men had in this time. No, he was a simple farmer. He was a sheep breeder.

He had been uniquely called to ministry. If you want to turn ahead just a few pages, you can take a look at Amos chapter 7, verses 14 and 15, where he says this of himself, I was no prophet, nor was I the son of a prophet, but I was a sheep breeder and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel.

Well, there's Amos. He's out there tending the flock. He's out there taking watch over the sheep, and God says, No, I've got a job for you to do, Amos.

You have to go prophesy to the people of Israel. Now, what's sort of interesting about this, and again, I want to give you just a little history lesson here, we remember at this time the people of God were divided into two nations because of a civil war. In the days of David and Solomon, Israel was one nation.

All twelve tribes were united under one nation called Israel. But after Solomon, there arose leadership which was not as good or as godly or as wise as David and Solomon, and the kingdom split in a civil war. Ten tribes to the north and two tribes to the south.

The ten northern tribes kept the name Israel to denote their nation. The southern two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, took the name Judah to describe their kingdom. And so you have the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel, and it stood this way for hundreds and hundreds of years in that ancient land.

What I want you to understand is this city of Tekoa where Amos was from, this is the city of Judah. It's about ten miles outside of Jerusalem. On a recent trip to Israel, we were driving by a little bit outside of town, and the guide points over and goes, well, you see that hill over there? That's where Tekoa was, and that's where it is, and now there's a village up there, and you describe the place, and there it was.

It's just about ten miles outside of Jerusalem. It's in the land of Judah. So God takes a man from the kingdom of Judah, and he sends him up north to the kingdom of Israel, because most of Amos's prophecy happens in the kingdom of Israel, and he does it up north there.

As a matter of fact, he seems to have done most of his ministry in the city of Bethel, as we'll see later on. One other thing I want you to notice here in verse 1, where he says that he was a sheep breeder, or some translations have a herdsman. It's not the normal word used there for a shepherd at all.

Now, he was a shepherd, but it's as if Amos deliberately said, I'm not going to take this name shepherd, I'm going to use something that's even more specific. Literally, he's known as a sheep raiser, and I think what he wants to emphasize with this is that the term shepherd, even in ancient times, could be spiritualized. We spiritualize the title shepherd today.

That's what the title pastor means. Pastor just simply means shepherd. And so if a person says, well, I'm a shepherd, if I introduced myself, you know, I'm a shepherd at the flock of Calvary Chapel, they would understand that I'm not actually keeping sheep there.

I'm using it in a spiritual way. Well, Amos didn't want anybody to get it mixed up, to think that somehow he was a spiritual shepherd. No, he says, I was a sheep raiser.

I dealt with the sheep and all their wool and all of their buying and all the rest of it. And notice what he says here, he says, which, verse one, which he saw concerning Israel. Amos was primarily a prophet to Israel, though he will speak to many nations, as we'll see here tonight.

He served in the days of the divided monarchy, as you notice here, verse one, the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash. So you have Jeroboam, who's also known as Jeroboam the second, in the northern kingdom of Israel, in the southern kingdom of Judah, you have Uzziah, king of Judah. Most researchers date the time of Amos' ministry somewhere between 760 and 750 years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

Now when Amos served as a prophet, the people of God had been divided into these two separate kingdoms for more than 150 years. Now, what you need to know about this is that the southern kingdom of Judah sometimes would have a godly king and sometimes have an ungodly king. But the northern kingdom of Israel had a distinct record, if you'll say.

They had an unbroken succession of ungodly kings. Not a single godly man of the bunch was there to be found. No, so in the succession of ungodly kings, you finally come to this guy known as Jeroboam the second.

Jeroboam, as he's mentioned here in verse 1, Jeroboam the son of Joash. Now politically and militarily, Jeroboam the second was one of the better kings of Israel. As a matter of fact, to kind of understand some of the dynamics of the time, at this time, the empire of Assyria was beginning to flex its muscle.

And one of the nations that the empire of Assyria flexed its muscle against was the nation of Syria. I hope I haven't hopelessly confused you already, because I'm talking about the empire of Assyria, beginning with an A, flexing its muscle against the much smaller nation of Syria, just beginning with an S. Now, what made this impact upon Israel was Syria was a constant threat, a constant rival, a constant difficulty for Israel on its north. So when Assyria came and conquered them, and neutralized them, well, it's as if the people of Israel just flowered.

They didn't have this threat that they had to worry about. And so they had a season of time of great military conquest, of great political victories, and of great material prosperity. Friends, this was boom time in Israel when Jeroboam the second was king.

I mean, things were great. Money was flowing, and things were great, the kingdom was expanding, and things were just going wonderfully. And in the midst of all of this, this prophet Amos comes up, and if there's any theme to the book of Amos, I heard one commentator, and I suppose it's as plausible theme as you could make for anything in the book of Amos, the theme of the book of Amos is, no.

Well, that's basically what Amos is doing. He's taking a look at Israel, riding high, oh, they're having a wonderful time, man, the money's flowing, there's peace and safety all around, and everything's great, and oh, it's just one great, big, marvelous party. And Amos comes along and he says, no, no, you're forgetting God.

You've turned your back on him. I know times are great, I know everybody's having a great time, but you can't live like this. You're ignoring the Lord your God.

That's exactly the kind of challenge that he's going to bring to the people of Israel. Did you notice in the last line there of verse one, he says, two years before the earthquake, he's saying, oh, great, this is exactly when we can date this. We have no other record of this earthquake anywhere in the Bible.

Some people connect it with something in Zechariah, but we really don't know for certain. So we don't have any reliable connection of when this earthquake happened, but you can know for sure that Amos ministered two years before the earthquake. Verse two, this was his message, this is his theme, and he said, the Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem.

The pastors of the shepherds mourn and the top of Carmel withers. Make no mistake about it, the prophet Amos brings a message of judgment. Now, the first two chapters of this book are going to describe the judgment of the Lord first against Gentile nations and then against Judah and Israel.

But notice where the judgment comes from. It says that he utters his voice from Jerusalem. This was extremely relevant for the people of Israel to hear because Jerusalem was within the nation of Judah.

Again, I'm explaining again, I hope I'm not over-explaining this, but it's very important to understand. In the southern kingdom of Judah, you had the capital city of Jerusalem. In the northern kingdom of Israel, you had the capital city of Samaria.

Now, if you're the king of the northern kingdom of Israel, and there you are in your headquarters in Samaria, you're there in your palace, you don't like it that your people go down to Jerusalem to honor the Lord at the feast every year, do you? Because that nation to your south is your rival and sometimes your enemy. It's as if in the midst of the Cold War, when the United States and the Soviet Union were at great battle with one another, as if we would regularly send over thousands and thousands of people to Moscow to be entertained by them. You'd say, I want to put a stop to this.

And so, if you were the king of Samaria, you might do exactly what that king did. What that king did, ruling from his palace in Samaria, the king over Israel, is he said, you know what, we're going to set up our own cities of worship. We're going to set up the city of Dan in the north, and Bethel in the south, and Beersheba on the side, and we'll set up these alternative cities for worship, and we'll tell all our people, hey, you don't have to go to Jerusalem, which is in the southern kingdom of Judah, stay at home and worship the Lord.

Stay at home and go to these places. Now, there's one problem with that, because God said specifically, I do not want you to do that. God had one place of worship for the people of Israel, and that was Jerusalem.

And so, what the kings of Israel did in setting up these alternative places of worship, even though they said, oh, we'll worship the Lord, we'll just do it in these other places. You can imagine that very quickly, those other places degenerated into an ungodly, idolatrous worship. So, what is the message that Amos brings? He comes and he says, notice it there in verse 2, the Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem.

Not Samaria, not Dan, not Bethel, from Jerusalem. You see what the call is right there? Saying, hey, let's not forget where the center of real worship is here. You set up your idolatrous altars in Dan.

You set them up in Bethel or Beersheba, forget it. It's going nowhere. And he also notices, and you see him speaking as a shepherd here, in verse 2, the pastors of the shepherds mourn.

You see, since Amos was a shepherd himself, he knew how the judgment of God could affect the land. He goes, listen, when God's people aren't right with him, then God's going to withhold the rain, and that's going to hurt my sheep. Don't do it.

I'm a simple shepherd, but your sin has an effect on me. If God's going to withhold the rain, or send plagues, or allow conquering armies to come through and go marauding through the land, it's going to affect me and my sheep, so please don't do it. The shepherds will mourn.

And then he says here, and the top of Carmel withers. Now, Carmel was a prominent mountain to the north of Israel, and it was the site of Elijah's dramatic confrontation with the prophets of Baal. Now, since Elijah served well before the time of Amos, it may be that Amos is reminding Israel of this victory of the Lord God over idolatry.

You remember that famous scene on the top of Mount Carmel, right? Where Elijah says, listen, let's stop playing games. If the Lord be God, serve him. If Baal be God, then serve him, but let's decide it once and for all.

And then this dramatic contest that I could talk for probably about the rest of our time together here this evening, and so we'll just say it was a very dramatic contest on the top of Mount Carmel, and the Lord God showed himself to be God over the prophets of Baal. Don't you see why Amos wouldn't bring this up at this time? Just to remind God's people, hey, remember, remember that the Lord, he is God. So now beginning with verse three, we have sort of a kaleidoscope of judgment.

Eight nations are going to be focused against and spoken about regarding the judgment of the Lord. And we begin first with the pagan nations, the Gentile nations. Let's start with Syria in verse three.

Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Damascus and for four, I will not turn away its punishment because they have threshed Gilead with implements of iron. But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad. I will also break the gate bar of Damascus and cut off the inhabitant from the Valley of Avon, the one who holds the scepter from Beth Eden.

The people of Syria shall go captive to Kerr, says the Lord. Now I want you to notice that phrase that opens things up in verse three. For three transgressions of Damascus and for four, get used to it.

You're going to see it repeated eight times. This formula is going to introduce God's judgment against each nation. It doesn't mean that Damascus, which by the way, was the capital city of Syria.

This is actually a prophecy against the nation of Syria. It's as if God were to say a prophecy against Moscow or London or Berlin. I mean, you know, you'd be talking about the nation because it's those are the capital cities of those nations in regard.

It doesn't mean that Damascus only committed three sins and then God says, Whoa, I just remembered a fourth. Well, here comes judgment. No, that's not it.

It has the idea of piling sin upon sin, upon sin, upon sin. That's really the sense of it. He's saying you've piled sin upon sin.

You put one on top of each other, three, no four, you just can keep piling them up because of this pile of sin that ever increases. Judgment is coming upon the nation of Syria. And now he's going to denote one

particular sin.

If you look at it there at the end of verse three, he says, because they thresh Gilead with implements of iron, see the reason Gilead belonged to Israel and God will judge Damascus and the Syrians for coming against the land of God's people and coming with such complete destruction that it's as if a deep plow or a great furrow has just been raked over the whole land. This talks about not just a military victory, but deliberate, wanton, just terrible destruction far beyond winning a battle. This is just revenge and hatred towards other people.

He says the people of Syria shall go captive to Kerr. They'll be taken away captive by the Assyrians. And this was fulfilled.

We know this from second Kings chapter 16 verse nine. Well, the kaleidoscope changes. Actually, when Amos said this, he was looking sort of Northwest a little bit when he said that.

Now he's going to turn around kind of to the Southeast and take a look at the Philistines, their leading city, Gaza. That's in verse six. Thus says the Lord for three transgressions of Gaza and for four, I will not turn away its punishment because they took captive the whole captivity to deliver them up to eat them.

But I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, which shall deliver our palaces. I will cut off from the inhabitants from Ashdod and the one who holds the scepter from Ashkelon. I will turn my hand against Ekron and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, says the Lord God.

Now, why is God's judgment coming against the Philistines? Well, because they came against God's people and it says they did deliver them up to eat them and because they took God's people and captured them and sold them into slavery. God says, I'm going to bring judgment against the Philistines. I want you to know that it wasn't just because they took Israelites and sold them into slavery.

Did you know that that was a common practice in the ancient world in certain cases? And this was the case. If you were a soldier in battle and your side lost and you were captured, not killed by the conquering army, you were sold as a slave. And you know what? I don't know if it was fair.

I don't know if it was nice, but it was just accepted. That's just what happened. Now, what the Philistines did, if you notice here, it says very plainly in verse six, because they took captive the whole captivity to deliver them up to eat them.

In other words, they went on slave raiding parties and they would go into the cities of Israel or the cities of Judah and they would just plain go in and take men, women and children, not soldiers, not defeated soldiers in combat. No, it's just anybody. Take them all captive and they wouldn't even use the slaves from the south.

Look, it was just pure profit. They sold them to eat them. God says for this, for this unspeakable cruelty, my judgment is going to come upon the Philistines.

Well, the kaleidoscope changes. Now we were looking southeast. Now we're going to turn around.

We're going to look northeast to the people of Tyre. That's up in Lebanon, verses nine and 10. We read there, thus says the Lord for three transgressions from Tyre and for four, I will not turn away its punishment because they delivered up the whole captivity to eat them and did not remember the covenant

of brotherhood.

But I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre, which shall devour its palaces. You see the city of Tyre, the people up in Lebanon, up there to the north and sort of west area of Israel, excuse me, east, I should say that area up and above Israel. Not only did they sin as the Philistines by selling people into captivity, but they did an even worse sin by not remembering the covenant of brotherhood.

Now, they should remember that there was a brotherhood bond that they were breaking when they committed the sin of making slave raids and such like that. And God says in judgment of this, I'm going to send a fire upon the wall of Tyre. Now, let's go to the next one, the Edomites, verse 11, thus says the Lord for three transgressions of Edom and for four, I will not turn away its punishment because he's pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity.

His anger tore perpetually and he kept his wrath forever. But I will send a fire upon Timon, which shall devour the palaces of Basra. You see, the people of Edom were descended from Esau, who was the brother of Jacob, later named Israel.

And this way, the Lord could speak of the people of Edom as a brother to the people of God. And because they shared a common ancestor, how much more remote should have it been that they would ever attack Israel? But they did. They held on to their anger and their wrath when they should have put it away a long time before.

And for this, the judgment of God is coming against them. What a reminder that is stated so picturesquely there in verse 11, because he pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity, his anger tore perpetually and he kept his wrath forever. That's a terrible place to be in, isn't it? When you're angry all the time, when you can't let go of the wrath or the anger, you know, you think you're going to get the people that you're angry at by holding on to that anger.

You just end up destroying yourself. It's like an acid that's too strong to keep inside any bottle and you keep it bottled up inside of yourself and you're waiting for the occasion to throw it upon the people that you're angry at. You know, you never get one of those occasions.

Are you terrible at this? Just like I am. I always think of the perfect thing to say about 10 minutes after I talked to that person. Man, if I had the chance, oh boy, would I? I never think of it at the time.

I'm always dumbfounded. It never comes off the way I want it. It's just terrible, terrible.

And all that anger, I or you or anybody else might hold on to, it just ends up ripping ourselves up. We need to learn how to give our anger and our wrath to God and let him be our avenger. The people of Edom did not do this.

The judgment of God is coming upon them. All right, now verse 13, the people of Ammon, the Ammonites. Verse 13, thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of the people of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they ripped open the women with child in Gilead, that they might enlarge their territory.

But I will kinder a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour its palaces amid shouting in the day of battle, and a tempest in the day of the whirlwind. Their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, says the Lord. This is unspeakable cruelty, isn't this, from the people of Ammon? Ripping open

pregnant women in Gilead.

Terrible slaughter and carnage, and God looks upon this, and he says, I am displeased. I see. You see, God's saying this great theme, this great message from the prophet Amos, he's saying it to the Gentile nations, he's saying, no.

Syria, no, you can't do what you've done. Edom, no, you can't do it. Philistone, no, you can't do it.

He's getting the message across, God has a line. When you cross it long enough, God, who is so rich in mercy, eventually he comes to an end of it, and he will bring judgment, and God promises captivity against the people of Ammon. But we just shoot right in here into chapter two, because you see it continues right along.

Verse one, thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime, but I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Cherub. Moab shall die with tumult, its shouting and trumpet sound, and I will cut off the judge from its midst, and slay all its princes with him, says the Lord. Moab was sort of a south eastern neighbor to Israel, and God says, well, I'm going to bring judgment against them as well, because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.

You know, that's just vindictive, the guy was already dead, but you took his dead carcass, and just to humiliate, and desecrate, and bring the most offense you could, you just sort of ground their eyes, and you took his bones, and you burned them to lime. God says, there's no place for that. Even if you could conjecture in your mind a situation where the king of Edom had to die, or it was befitting for him to die, maybe he died in battle, this is over the line, this is just too much, and God says, no! You might say that the Moabites sinned against the past by desecrating the remains of an Edomite hero, this king.

Now why don't you just pause for a moment and consider what we've seen here. We've seen the nations against Syria, against Philistia, against Lebanon, against Edom, against Ammon, and against Moab. Now, put yourself in the sandals of somebody in Israel right now.

You're in the city of Bethel, by the way, it seems that that's where the prophet Amos delivered these prophecies, as we'll see in later chapters as we get into them in following weeks. You're in the city of Bethel, and you hear this prophet, and he's going along, and he's saying, I'm calling for judgment against Syria, I'm calling for judgment against Philistia, judgment against Tyre, judgment against Edom, judgment against Ammon, judgment against Moab, and what are you saying as an Israelite? You're saying, preach it, brother! Oh, this is good, man, this man has something to say. Man, it's about time we had a preacher like this around here.

Boy, he's laying it on the line, isn't it great? Man, those nations around us, I've had it about up to here with them, the Syrians, and the Edomites, and the people from Lebanon, and the Moabites, all of them! Preach it, Amos! Now look at verse four. Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Judah, 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, lies after which their fathers walked, but I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

I don't know about you, but when I read that, it just kind of hurts. Because when God says, for three transgressions and for four, alright, God, say it to Syria, say it to Lebanon, say it to Moab, say it to Amos,

say it to all of them, God, but Judah, these are your people, God. You know, this is the nation where Jerusalem was, these are the descendants from David, this is where the godly king Uzziah reigns.

And I can see how you could say sin is piled upon sin in all those pagan nations, but sin piled upon sin here in Judah, and the Lord says, you've got it, now, you say, well, Lord, what is our sin? We haven't done these terrible things that the Syrians did, or the Edomites did, or the Moabites did, what's our sin, Lord? Look at it there, he says, right there, he says, because they've despised the law of the Lord. You see, Judah's sin was that they despised and disobeyed the law of the Lord, and I think if you were there listening, you'd say, hey, well, that's not fair, isn't that a higher standard than you're holding Syria to? I mean, Syria, you're just not asking them to be, don't be extra cruel when you practice war against somebody else. That's what you're saying to Syria.

You know, to the Philistines, you're saying, well, you can sell slaves, but just ones you've captured in battle. You can't sell slaves of people that you've just gone and done slave raiding, you know, parties against. You're pretty soft on them, God, why are you so hard on the people of Judah? Because he's given them his word.

You know, the chosen people, special honor, special responsibility, isn't that how it is, my friends? You see, this higher accountability, and it is higher than God required of any of those other six nations. God blessed his people with the law and the commandments, and so he expected them to honor and obey his word. Greater blessing means greater accountability.

You all here tonight, you're doing a dangerous thing. You are increasing your accountability before the Lord God. That's really going to empty out service here on Wednesday night.

I'm not going to come, it's just going to make me more accountable. Well, notice the two go together, though. Greater blessing, greater accountability.

It's worth it to gain the blessing. Notice what he says here, verses four and five, he says, because their lies led them astray. You see, since the word of God brings us truth, when we despise and disobey God's word, we naturally embrace and follow lies.

Friends, you can't reject the truth without grabbing onto a lie. You're going to have something. And so if you push away the truth, you're going to embrace a lie.

And that's exactly what the people of Judah were doing. And God says, I'm going to send a fire upon Judah. It's going to devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

The same judgment he's described in all the other places. I don't know if you noticed, but consistently through the judgment of each of the six previous nations, there's the mention of fire or palaces or walls. God says, I'm going to do it to Judah, too.

They're in line for judgment unless they repent. But I should say, as we come to verse six, really, all of this before has been preface. Now, verse six begins the real heart.

Of the message of the prophet Amos, because he's standing in Israel and his messages to Israel, and he's dealt with all the nations around and he dealt with Israel's brother, the southern kingdom of Judah, last of all. But now he's going to talk to Israel. You see, I can imagine the people of Israel as they're sitting around and hearing Amos preach the sermon there in the city of Bethel, they hear a mention, you know, Syria and

Lebanon and they're applauding when he does that.

And then when they mention Judah, oh, they go, ooh, you know, they go, wow, he's gutsy. Boy, that southern kingdom, you know, you got to have a lot of guts to criticize them. Look at that.

He's from Judah. And there he is. He he's willing to lay it on the line there.

Wow. But now they're not going to think he's great. They're not even going to think he's gutsy.

Now they're going to hate his guts because he's going to tell them the truth about themselves. Verse six. Thus says the Lord.

For three transgressions of Israel and for four, I will not turn away its punishment because they sell the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals. They pant after the dust of the earth, which is on the head of the poor and pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go into the same girl to defile my holy name.

They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their God. You see, the pattern continues, doesn't it? Sin piled upon sin. And it's the same way in Israel.

But if you want to say Israel is even worse because of all the other nations, God mentioned one, maybe two things where they were in sin. Here, Amos paints a picture of sin upon sin upon sin. It begins with injustice.

The rich being in showing injustice against the poor, he says, because they sell the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals. The rich are taking cruel advantage of the poor. God says, no, you're not going to get away with it.

You see, it was a time of tremendous economic prosperity in Israel at this time. Oh, the money was flowing. The funny thing about it was it was flowing into the pockets only of the rich, not of the poor.

And then he says, a man and his father go into the same girl. Please, he's painting a very vivid picture here. You see, the vivid picture that he paints is centered around this idea of sexual immorality at a pagan temple.

Probably what he has in mind is a pagan priestess who was also a prostitute. And on one day, she services the sun. On the next day, the father comes and visits her.

You see, and it shows how the standards that were once accepted are now completely disregarded. So they're probably using the same ritual, idolatrous prostitute. You say, well, that's bad enough.

That's terrible, terrible sin. He's going to pile sin upon sin here. Look at it here in verse six, seven and eight here.

In verse eight, he says, seven, he says, a man and his father go into the same girl to defile my holy name. They lie down by every altar on clothes taken and pledge. What does that mean, clothes taken and pledge? Well, the Bible says that if you have to make collateral for a loan, you can give your garment.

But very specifically in the book of Exodus, God said, if you ever take your neighbor's garment as a pledge, you have to give it back to him by sundown because he needs it to keep warm. Is a way of expressing don't take a man's life essential things as collateral away from him in a loan. That's not fair to him.

It's not good to him. And so don't do that. You know what they're doing? They're spitting in the face of God by violating this command.

So so here's this man committing sexual immorality with a idolatrous prostitute whom his son saw the previous day. And while he's doing it, he's laying down on a garment that he ripped off from a poor man. Bad enough.

I'll go one step further. Look at it there at the end of verse eight and drink in the wine of the condemned in the house of their God. OK, it's not just that they're doing all this and then boozing it up and getting drunk.

Worst of all, it's the wine of the condemned. In other words, it's money bought with excuse me, wine bought with money that was dishonestly gained. And so you see this picture here, a man committing sexual morality with a temple prostitute, the same girl that his son visited the day before, keeping warm with a garment extorted from the poor, toasting his success with wine bought with money dishonestly gained.

Amos says, that's your picture of sin in Israel, sin piled upon sin, piled upon sin. And to make it even worse, take a look at verse nine. Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was as strong as the Oaks.

Yet I destroyed his fruit above and roots beneath. Also, it was I who brought you up by the land of Egypt and led you 40 years to the wilderness to possess the land of the Amorites. I raised up some of your sons as prophets and some of you young men as Nazarites.

Is it not so? Oh, you children of Israel, says the Lord. But you gave the Nazarites wine to drink and commanded the prophets saying, do not prophesy. This is the sin of Israel.

And remember all that I did for them. Why, when they came into the land, I cleared it out the way before them and I helped them defeat the Amorites. And I did all this.

And what gratitude do they show towards me? None, none. Instead, they throw it back in my face with sinful conduct. Friends, this principle of a walk with God based in gratitude for what he has done for us, this is so important for the Christian.

And it shows why even as believers, we must continually hear the message of the cross. You know, you ever feel that way, maybe in some of your more carnal moments, I mean, I'll just speak for myself, perhaps you hear someone preach a gospel sermon and they're talking about salvation and how Jesus paid the penalty that you and I deserve to pay and he bore our sins on the cross. You kind of go, oh, boy, I've heard this one a couple thousand times.

Friends, check your heart, please, because if you listen to it with the right kind of heart, with the right kind of ears, you'll find yourself amazed all over again with the fact that God saved you and that, yes, God, I want to live my life in gratitude towards the Lord God who accomplished such a great salvation for me by the work of Jesus on the cross. We must live our lives in proper gratitude for what the Lord God has done

for us through the work of Jesus Christ. Oh, and that's what the people of Israel were not doing.

God says, I raised up some of you son of prophets and then you you told them, do not prophesy. I raise up some of your sons of Nazarites. That's a special vow of consecration.

You try to get them to break their vows of consecration. And so judgment is coming. Take a look here at verse 13.

He says, Behold, I am weighed down by you as a cart full of sheaves is weighed down. That terrible. How do you like the Lord to say that of us? You weary me.

You weigh me down. Now, might I say that we should understood here, understand before we go any further that this text is just speaking in a figure of speech. We can't bother God.

You know, God isn't up in heaven saying, oh, man, these guys are just wearing me out. I don't know if I can go another day. You know, I need to get some extra sleep tonight because of the thing that these people in Simi Valley are putting me through.

My friends, it's speaking in a figure of speech. He's speaking after the manner of men. It's as if the load of human guilt and sin and rebellion and neglect weighs heavy upon God.

And he's weary of it. That's the picture being painted for us. Some way down by.

Parents, you know what this is talking about, don't you? Sometimes your children are not the slightest weight in the world. Sometimes they are just the greatest delight you have in your life. I mean, it's just wonderful.

And other times when your children are being disobedient and rebellious, your children are a tremendous weight, aren't they? That's what God said. Look, I love you, but you're a tremendous weight to me. God is confronting them with their sin.

These are the themes throughout the book of Amos. And any time justice is perverted, any time the rich receive preferential treatment or the poor are oppressed, it burdens the God who sees from heaven and he promises that he's going to set it right. Any time people cheat, manipulate and make money off of others in questionable ways, even if it's legal.

Look, let's let's move beyond that. As Christians, we have a higher standard than what's legal. We're called to live by what's right before God.

I know there may be all kinds of ways that you can cheat someone else in business or cheat someone else in what you do. And it's all legal. Man, any lawyer would back you up.

And if you go to court, the judge would bang his gavel and decide in your favor. But you know in your heart that it's not right. You're ripping that person off.

Or even if you you take advantage of somebody in their time of misfortune. Oh, there you are at the at the garage sale of the person who who desperately needs to raise some money because they're they fall on a hard time and there's something for sale there. And, you know, it's a bargain for the price that they've listed there.

Oh, but you just have to grind them down to the final penny, don't you? God sees it from heaven. He promises he's going to set it right. God gives generous hearts towards other people, especially people in need.

Now, look, if the fellow is just just selling things because he wants to buy another new thing and then well, then grind them down all you want. Friends, and we're talking about the poor and the unfortunate. God says you deal with them generously.

Look at the judgment that he's going to bring upon them. Verse 14. Therefore, flight shall perish from the swift.

The strong shall not strengthen his power, nor shall the mighty deliver himself. He shall not stand who handles the bow. The swift of foot shall not escape, nor shall he who rides a horse deliver himself.

The most courageous men of might shall flee naked in that day. You see, one way that the judgment of God would express itself against the people of Israel would be that they would find themselves unable to succeed in ways that they previously were strong. You see, without the blessing of God, the swift isn't fast enough, the strong isn't strong enough, the mighty isn't mighty enough to succeed.

Bottom line was Israel was far too confident in their own ability. But God says, I'm going to bring you low. You want to escape that judgment, you can escape it.

Realize right now that even your strength is nothing without the Lord. I think about the things that you're strong in. Think about that thing in your life.

You said, listen, I know I got a lot of problems, but I'm never going to fall in this area. You better watch out. Because there can come a day where the swift isn't swift enough and the strong isn't strong enough and the mighty isn't mighty enough.

Now, remember the words of Paul from First Corinthians 10, where he says, therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. We can become far more vulnerable in our perceived strengths than in our acknowledged weaknesses, because in those weaknesses, you know, you have to depend on the Lord, don't you? But no strengths here. And I and I guess all of us were just cocky enough to think that we might be able to get by on our own strength.

All right, let's wrap it up here with a look at chapter three. He says, hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family, which I brought up in the land of Egypt, saying, you only have I known of all the families of the earth. Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities.

You say, whoa, wait a minute, wait a minute. First, they say, Lord, hear this word, which the Lord has spoken against you. We understand that, right? O children of Israel, against the whole family, which I brought up out of Egypt.

All right, we're getting that, by the way, amazing how throughout the Old Testament, the Lord calls Israel back time and time again. Hey, I'm the God that brought you out of Egypt. I'm the God that brought you out of Egypt.

I'm the. You know why? Because the central act of redemption in the Old Testament was the exodus, was the deliverance from Egypt. And God says, I always want you to remember that central act of redemption.

What's the central act of redemption in the New Testament? Indeed, of the whole Bible, God's whole plan of redemption. It's the cross. And that's why God says, continue to look back to the cross, look back to the cross.

Remember, God said, remember, I'm the one who saved you by the work of Jesus on the cross. Don't you forget that. Remember what I did for you on the cross.

Oh, how it's easy to forget. But remember what a mess you were before you knew Jesus. Remember the guilt.

Remember the shame. Remember how you sinned and you couldn't stop yourself. Oh, and I know Satan loves to play the violin in the background and remind you of all those wonderful times.

But you just forget about the times when you're throwing up all morning, aren't you? Forget about the times when you, we just flat out wanted to kill yourself, didn't you? Oh, yes. Satan wants to just recall sweet times from the days of old. But friends, remember what it was really like and praise God for the deliverance.

Now, notice this. He goes against the whole family, which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying, you only have I known of all the families of the earth. We go, oh, thank you, Lord.

Oh, God, you've chosen us. We're special to you. Us only, Lord.

Out of all the family, you chose us. Thank you, Lord. Israel is saying.

Now look at the therefore in verse two. Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities. Wait a minute, God.

You're not getting this. We're special to you. That means we get the get out of jail free card, right? We're special to you, God.

That means we get the mulligan. We get the free pass. Right, God? Cusses no.

No, here's the clear connection between great privilege and what's the privilege. You only have I know. That's the privilege.

Well, wherever you have privilege, you have responsibility and the responsibility results in judgment when they don't fulfill it. Therefore, I will punish you. If Israel thought that they're standing as a specially chosen nation made them less responsible before God, then they were tragically mistaken.

Oh, friends, might this remind us when we as Christians, when we want to go out and start ranting about the sins of the world. Oh, look at the ungodly pagans all around how sinful they are. And friends, they are sinful.

Let's not debate that. I'm not here to argue that. But shouldn't the Lord bring a much stricter judgment against us? Where's people he's given us so much.

Look at the inescapable logic of God's judgment. Verse three. Can two walk together unless they are agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest when it has no prey? Will a young lion cry out from his den if he has caught nothing? Will a bird fall in the snare in the earth where there's no trap for it? Will a snare spring up

from the earth that has caught nothing at all? If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? You know, if you'd like to write in the margin of your Bible right here.

Duh. That's basically what he said. The argument is very nice.

It's like saying, well, is the Pope Catholic? That's what he's saying here. Everybody knows these things are true. When the lion roars, everybody gets afraid.

When the trap is sprung, it goes and it catches. I mean, these are just cause and effect. Now look at the last line of verse six.

If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it? See, Amos is preparing the people of Israel saying, when this I know things are riding high now. But when the calamity comes, you're going to know that the Lord did it. Not fate, not chance, not just some freak economic downturn.

Not an overly aggressive neighbor. Not bad luck. Not an accident.

It will be the hand of the Lord. Cause and effect, just like anything else. And here's the message of the prophet.

Verse seven. Surely the Lord does nothing unless he reveals a secret to his servants, the prophets. A lion is roared.

Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken. Who can but prophesy? Again, in context, Amos is speaking here of the coming judgment upon Israel. I think that some people have taken this verse out of context.

Verse seven. And they think that God somehow tells everything that's going to happen in the future, at least in his plan of redemption, to the prophets first. No, not really.

For example, I think of a passage like in the book of Ephesians, chapter three, where Paul describes how God deliberately hid the nature of the church. That it would be a new body, not Israel, not Gentile, but bringing the two together into one. God deliberately hid that from all the prophets.

Well, he didn't reveal that to the prophets. He didn't reveal it. He didn't talk about it until it happened.

But what I think this principle is true in the context is God never brings judgment without first warning of it by his prophets. Oh, I think that's the key. Because God wants to give people the opportunity to repent.

And so when it says there in verse seven, you look right there, verse seven. Surely, Lord, God does nothing unless he reveals his secret to the servants, his prophets in the context he's speaking about judgment. And I think that's how it works out in practicality as well.

And Amos is saying, listen, don't blame me. I'm just the messenger just as much as everybody gets afraid when the lion roars. So when the Lord speaks to me, then I have to prophesy.

So now he's going to talk about the message of judgment that's going to come. Look at it here. Verse nine.

Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod and the palaces, the land of Egypt and say, assemble on the mountains of Samaria. See great tumult in her midst and the oppressed within her. They do not know to do right, says the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.

Now, the city of Ashdod was a leading city among the Philistines, and God invites the nations. He says, listen, Philistines, come on. Egyptians, come on.

I want you to see and take a look at Israel and their sin. So you'll know when I bring judgment upon them that they deserved it, because what did they do? They stored up violence and robbery in their palaces. This is a very predominant theme throughout the book of Amos, how the rich and the powerful of Israel use their wealth and their power to oppress and steal from others.

Friends, let me make it very clear that it is not inherently more godly to be poor and is not inherently more godly to be rich. You find great men and women of God in the Bible who are incredibly rich, great men and women in the Bible who were incredibly poor. But let's face it, when you're rich, you can sin in a lot more sophisticated ways.

Right. Isn't that it? When you're rich, the smorgasbord of sin is a lot bigger to you. And that's one of the reasons why it's difficult for a rich man to get into heaven, because the smorgasbord of temptation is in front of him in ways that it's not before the poor man.

And God says to the rich of Israel, I've seen how you use this, this temptation to sin and you've sinned, you've sinned against the poor. Look at the destruction that God's judgment is going to bring here. Verse 11 says, therefore, excuse me, no, I'm at the wrong verse here.

Therefore, verse 11. Therefore, thus says the Lord God, an adversary shall be all around the land. He shall sap your strength from you and your palaces shall be plundered.

Thus says the Lord, as a shepherd takes from the mouth of a lion two legs or a piece of an ear. So shall the children of Israel be taken out to dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed and on the edge of a couch. Well, God says, I'm going to send an adversary to you and you're going to eventually lead your way to captivity.

And he's this very vivid picture. A very it's kind of a disturbing picture there. Did you see it there in verse 12? As a shepherd takes from the mouth of a lion, two legs or a piece of an ear.

So shall the children of Israel be taken out who dwell in Samaria. So that's based on an Old Testament law that said, if you're a shepherd and you're watching somebody else's sheep and you go out with 20 sheep and you come back with 19. Then you're responsible to pay the owner of the sheep for that sheep that got lost.

You say, well, no, wait a minute here. It's not my fault because a wolf or a lion came along and got one of the sheep and took him away and ate it up. God says, well, OK, well, here's the allowance.

You have to bring back a piece of that sheep to show it to the person. You have to bring back a piece for two reasons. First of all, it shows you just didn't run like a coward and let the animal have its way with it.

And second of all, it proves that it was devoured by a wild animal. So God says, OK, here you take the piece back. God says, that's all that's going to be left of Israel.

Isn't that a shocking figure that this is how I'm going to judge Israel? Look at the end here, verse 13. Here and testify against the house of Jacob, says the Lord God, the God of hosts, that in that day I will punish Israel for their transgressions. I will also visit destruction on the altars of Bethel and the horns of the altar

shall be cut off and fall to the ground.

I will destroy the winter house along with the summer house. The houses of ivory shall perish and the great houses shall have an end, says the Lord. Oh, Israel, you set up those idolatrous altars.

You didn't want the people to go to Jerusalem. So you set up altars in Dan and Beersheba and Bethel and Gilgal. God says, I'm going to cut them low.

I'm going to bring them down to the ground. I'll destroy them. And even the horns of the altar, that place on each corner that was thought to represent the strength of the altar.

God says, I'm going to deal with that as well. And notice it here, says the great houses shall have an end, says the Lord. You know, the thing is, when we're comfortable and prosperous, doing well, sometimes it's easy to get an unwarranted sense of security, isn't it? Yeah, everything's right.

Everything's strong. Everything's good. Yeah.

We think that the hard time is only going to come to the poor person, the person down on their luck. God says, no, my judgment can come to the great house as well. It's not going to stop at the places of idol worship.

It's going to extend to places built and enjoyed through oppression and robbery. Those fancy houses that you built, God says, I'm going to bring them low. You know, in the age prior to Jeroboam II, archaeologists have discovered, when they excavate a city before this period of Israel's history, they notice that in the city, pretty much all the houses are of the same size.

But starting at the time of Jeroboam and afterwards, they notice, archaeologists have discovered this, that neighborhoods in a city, you'll have a rich neighborhood of really big houses and a poor neighborhood of tiny houses where people lived in squalor. Those larger houses were filled with all the marks of prosperity, including ivory carvings. They found them in cities such as Tisra.

But you see, God's judgment will come against those houses as well, just as Amos promised. Here's my point, my friends. That great house is not going to be a reference for you in the day of judgment.

You can build a wall, you can build a palace, you can construct anything you want. None of that can shelter you in the day of judgment. Not today, not in the age to come.

No, there's only one shelter in the day of judgment. Remember? Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee. He can be the shelter in the day of judgment.

That's what you find, people self-assured, confident in their prosperity, feeling great about themselves, and they think that it will be their shelter in the day of judgment. It will not. God will blow over the great house just as well as any other house.

No, you put yourself in the shelter of Jesus Christ. Friends, that will never be rocked away. Let's pray and thank the Lord for our time together.

Lord God, work in our hearts, won't you? Father, help us to see your searching judgment and how it should apply in our lives. Lord, we stand before you right now as people who say, Lord, even if we don't want it, we know it's right for your judgment to begin at the house of God. You've blessed us so much.

You've given us so many privileges. Father, we trust that you know how to deal with us. We trust your word and your work in our life.

So, Father, pour out your spirit upon us. Show us the great blessings of your work and of your grace in our life. We love you.

We praise you. Help us to find our shelter in Jesus Christ and in nothing else. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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