

TIMELESS TRUTHS FOR A CRUCIAL TIME

The Messages of Twelve Old Testament Prophets

Discussion Guide
Vol. 13, No. 45
August 22, 2010

Sermon Title

The God of Social Justice

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Amos 1-9

Introduction: The message of Amos to Israel causes us to realize that God does indeed call ordinary people to do extra-ordinary tasks and to understand that nothing escapes His watchful eye. He does rule over the nations of the earth and kingdoms rise and fall at His command. Social justice and ethical morality are always His concern for every people group in the world, regardless of size or power.

Sermon Outline

I. The Life and Times of Amos the Prophet

- A. Amos—the *burden bearer*—a man from among the rural working class of shepherds and farmers, from Tekoa
- B. Prophesied in the later years of Jeroboam II (767-753 BC) and two years prior to the great earthquake in the reign of Uzziah (see Zech 14:5) which he may have prophesied, thus providing proof for his prophecies he is now writing down
- C. Called from the sheep by God and sent with a message to Bethel in Israel to announce to the King (Amos 7:15) [prophet to Israel primarily]
- D. Prophecy was written down at least two years after being orally delivered

II. The Focus of the Message of Amos

- A. Prophecies against the nations around Israel & Judah (Amos 1:2-2:3)
(Damascus, Ammon, & Moab—cruelty in war; Gaza & Tyre—slave trade; Edom—ancestral brother had no compassion)
- B. Prophecies against Israel & Judah
 1. Judah to be destroyed but a remnant preserved (Amos 2: 4-5)
Rejected the Law of God and did not keep His statutes
 2. Israel to be smitten permanently (Amos 5:2)
Participated in slave trade, oppressed the poor, incest, probable temple prostitution & lenders taking unfair advantage of borrowers
- C. The five visions: *(detail from Gleason Archer, OT Intro)*
 1. Locusts (7:1-3)—restrained by intercession
 2. Fire (7:4-6)—restrained by intercession
 3. Plumb line (7:7-9)—all to be leveled flat
 4. Late summer fruit (8:1-14)—the end is at hand
 5. Smitten temple of Bethel (9:1-10)—Israel to be treated like the heathen
- D. Promises of hope and restoration for Judah (9:11-15)

III. How Does Amos' Message Apply to Our Lives?

- A. God is concerned about social justice and even pagan nations should intrinsically understand ethical and humane treatment of all people (chapters 1 & 2)
- B. God will hold an enlightened people more responsible—Israel had received the personal revelation of God and His law; she was without any excuse (3:1-2)
- C. One of the greatest judgments against a nation is God withholding His Word (without prophetic revelation the people perish), it is a great calamity to have no guidance from God, no moral compass, no *word* from the Lord (8:11-14)
- D. God is the God of all the nations and every people will answer to Him—nations may claim other gods and forms of religion, they are empty idols—God is sovereign and holds all people directly accountable to Him (9:1-10)

Conclusion: Although these specific prophecies of Amos were pointed at Israel and Judah and surrounding nations, his message is timeless. From the time that Cain asked the question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” to the time that Jesus answered the question, “Who is my brother?” (parable of the Good Samaritan), God views the whole human race as one family and every person on the planet is our brother or sister. As human beings we have a moral duty to care for one another. As Christians we have a Divine mandate to provide the greatest care of all by proclaiming the gospel to all people everywhere.

The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. He said, "The LORD roars from Zion and from Jerusalem He utters His voice; And the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn, And the summit of Carmel dries up."

Amos 1: 1-2 (NASB)

Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because they rejected the law of the LORD and have not kept His statutes; Their lies also have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked. "So I will send fire upon Judah and it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem."

Amos 2: 4-5 (NASB)

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss Amos 2:8 and Amos 5:11 in terms of modern lending and credit practices.

2. What do you think Amos 5:13 means? When is it prudent to keep silent and when does God expect us to speak out?

3. In light of the prophesies of inevitable judgment, at what point is it too late for a nation to return to God? Does this apply to individuals as well?

4. In ancient times Israel represented God's chosen people and it was easy to distinguish her from pagan nations. Today, the people of God (the church) are sprinkled throughout every nation of the earth. In what ways are God's people included or excluded in judgment against their own nation?

Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because they sell the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of sandals. These who pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless also turn aside the way of the humble. And a man and his father resort to the same girl in order to profane My holy name. On garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined."

Amos 2: 6-8 (NASB)

"I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; and I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

Amos 5: 21-24 (NASB)

