

Amos Part 1 – *"Judgment Will Fall-Yep, us too."*

This week we move from Joel to the prophet Amos. Say, Amos. Now you know some more Hebrew, for the pronouncement is the same in Hebrew as in English. The name Amos means "burden." Not the most admirable character to give a child. Can you imagine naming your child? What shall we call him? Let's name him "Big Burden." Perhaps his parents already knew Amos would be a prophet and carry an enormous burden on his people. Amos is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible outside his book, although Stephen quotes his work in the book of Acts. The Lord gives Amos the command to preach the terrifying message that God, in his judgment, would end the northern kingdom ultimately (5:17).

As an introduction, let us learn that Amos was not a poor peasant; instead, Amos was a wealthy sheep breeder and an owner of sycamore fig orchards in the lowlands around the Dead Sea and along the Mediterranean coast. He lived in Tekoa in Judah, some ten miles south of Jerusalem. Still unschooled, Amos verifies that God summoned him temporarily to leave his business and preach to the northern kingdom. When the Lord calls, we go, and so does Amos. Scholars believe his ministry lasted only a few short years before returning home to his occupation. In chapter 7:14, Amos admits feeling unqualified for the task saying, "But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, go prophesy to my people Israel." Amos was an ordinary, down-to-earth type of guy who shoots from the hip; this is often whom the Lord chooses for his work.

Let's pause here to pray – Father, as we look into your Word today, we pray that you would use this ancient prophet to speak into our lives even today. We understand your truth is timeless, and you have things in your Word for us today. As we humble ourselves before you, make ourselves available to the work of your Holy Spirit. I pray that you would move among us and stir us so that we would see ourselves in this story. Speak to us, oh Lord, like you spoke to Amos' generation. Amen

Now I said Amos is an ordinary farmer-type guy who shoots from the hip. Allow me to provide an example. Follow along as I read these words beginning in verse 4:1. "Hear this word, you cows, of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, "Bring us some drinks!" My kind of guy!

Amos is good at initially denouncing the sins of Israel's six neighboring nations in chapter one. Then he follows up with his native country of Judah before traveling to the Region of Israel because they too, have not kept the Lord's commandments. Amos says, "Listen, you fools! The Lord might forgive the first three times, but upon the fourth one, you are in trouble!" But this is the point Amos makes because the people have not lived up to their responsibility as God's people, obeying his commands, "Therefore I God will punish you for all your sins." They, the chosen, will be destroyed just as the nations' God destroyed at the time of Israel's conquest of the Promised Land. Just as God chose Israel by grace, so have we been chosen, if, and only if, we believe in Jesus Christ. I must tell you that Israel is in trouble, and so are we. Although redeemed, if we do not follow God's way, worshiping him only and obeying his holy and just commands, judgment will fall on us too!

For centuries, people have rejected the warnings of the prophets. In Amos 3:3-8, the prophet calls for clear thinking using nine rhetorical questions and one interjected statement. His rhetorical points appear apparent, moving from the lesser to the more remarkable, from non-threatening to threatening. The fact is that a warning is not given unless disaster is imminent, but notice is being given, and God is sending disaster. More importantly, the God of grace does not send the disaster without sending a warning first—the very point of preaching. Pastors who speak on the authority of the Bible relay that judgment is coming. It is a warning given precisely to avert judgment. As the quote's author, Comedian Bill Engvall, often said, "Here's your sign." However, this is no comedy sign, nor is it a joke.

I recently listened to a conversation between a pastor from California and a gentleman from Jerusalem, Amir Tsafati, a servant of the Lord, called to teach from the Bible what God's plans are for the end of times. Tsafati provides an incredible look into what is happening now with the nations of Israel, the Middle East, Africa, and the United States. We must acknowledge that we are in the last days where we stand on the future of the prophetic timeline. As we navigate through the waters of Satan's deception these final days, there are spiritual items critical for believers to cling to.

As believers, we should not be scared but prepared to survive and thrive as we wait for the final trumpet of the Lord. Now get this, no biblical prophecy has ever been proven false. There are times and seasons of prophecy, and we are to stand as watchmen on the wall. I am

giving you a fair warning to stand on the wall looking into the future. Apart from listening to the conversation, I want us to dive into verses 3, 4, and 6 from chapter 3. Follow along as I read. "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? Does a lion roar in the thicket when he has no prey? Does he growl in his den when he has caught nothing?" Echoes of the image presented by Hosea about a lion.

In chapter 5 of Hosea, God describes himself as a moth and later as a lion. God says he will come to Ephraim first as a moth, but if Ephraim does not listen, he will come as a lion. The image of a moth means that when we fall out of God's will, God gives a gentle warning. God does not like to treat us harshly, so he comes first as a moth, fluttering around like a moth trying to distract us from what is getting us off the right path. However, if people do not respond when God comes as a moth, he comes as a lion, determined for his people, us, to walk in his way.

The points that Amos makes appear obvious. For instance, if people meet to walk, it is by prior arrangement with a destination in mind. If either party has yet to agree to meet, the walk will not take place. A lion does not roar if he is about to seize his prey. If he growls in his den, the lion has caught his prey. Now follow along as I jump to verse 6. When a trumpet sounds in a town or city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?" Each of these verses has the nature of cause and effect, but I want to point out that Amos emphasizes the warning. It is the warning God has given through him to his people and us. We cannot walk with God if we go in a different direction.

When Pat and I take vacations to the beach and go on walks, we walk at different paces. What happens is that we miss the time of fellowship. She is looking for shells, and me not so much. She wants to walk to the pier before turning back. Me, I want to turn back before getting to the pier. The point is this, can you walk with a person if you are not in agreement? If you are going to walk with God, you need to be united in heart, going to the same place, along the same path with the same purpose, and here is where Amos makes a point to Israel on why judgment will come. Without friendship, there is no fellowship or unity.

Israel could not expect God to walk with them or to continue his favor toward them when they walked contrary to Him. Israel continued to live and behave against who was setting the pace. Remember the words of Jesus in John 8:12. "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." Secondly, God is the lion crying out

judgment to the nation, and the government will undergo his decision as if Israel were the target of his wrath, and when the trumpet blows, will not the people be afraid? The trumpet warning is Amos' climax, bringing his illustration more closely to the hearts of his hearers. It is God's way of telling the people that judgment is coming. I don't know about you, but I pay attention when I hear a warning signal. It is foolish not to respond to that warning. The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?

The late Presbyterian preacher and Bible teacher J. Vernon McGee once said this; "God will not allow any nation to dwell in peace and prosperity when it is in sin, and even though there may be a time of peace and prosperity, judgment will come." "When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it? Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants, the prophets."

The question that often comes up is this: Does God still act in this way? How can any of us say for sure? Are we prophets to say that earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, fires, or whatever are caused by God's judgment? Will God still bring calamity? In the Old and New Testaments, the Bible says that God punishes when sin persists in evil. Can this nation we live in come under God's chastening hand? I believe so. I believe God is still Sovereign and will act, and this nation will reap what it sows. If we kick God out of our lives, we will reap what we sow. We need to be careful in this nation because we take the blessings of God for granted. The nation of Israel did the same, and I must say that the nation of Israel is still walking a treacherous path of a coming judgment these days.

In closing, I ask God for a spiritual awakening. We pass laws in this country that God hates to make them legal. We do things to reject God's love and then wonder why God is not answering our prayers. I sound like an old-time fire and brimstone preacher. Maybe that's what we need, a little fire and brimstone. It's a fact that we reap what we sow. This nation has to wake up! Aware of the times we are living in. The choices are being placed before us right now. The late Billy Graham said that if God does not punish this nation for its wickedness, he must apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah. That folks, is a strong statement. There is no shame in the nation's sin. Is there any shame in our sin? I leave you today with this from Isaiah 45:7. "I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things." Amen.

