

"Prepare to Meet Your God, O Israel"

The Book of Amos

Outline

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 - 1. Amos was a herdsman and a fig picker.
 - C. God chooses Amos to prophesy to Israel.
 - 1. A prophesy of future calamity and ultimate judgement for their sin.
- II. Two absolutes.
 - A. The Lord will not cease until He has established righteousness and blessing in all the earth.
 - B. No sin goes unpunished—someone must pay will pay for the consequences of sin.
- IV. Coming judgement.
 - A. God's patience has run out, judgement is imminent.
 - 1. Future Judgement on eight nations (1: 3-2:6) Judah and Israel the final two nations.
 - B. The call to repent (chapter 4:9-11).
 - C. The failure to repent: (4:12) **Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!**
- V. Judgement and Discipline.
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 - 1. God's people are under the atoning blood of Jesus Christ who paid it all!
 - C. The difference between divine judgement and divine discipline.
 - 1. When God "punishes" in judgment, God is being the judge.
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- VI. How does God get one's attention?
 - A. Through calamity and the real threat of judgement.

B. What should we do?

1. (5:14-15 *Seek good and not evil so that you can live.... Hate evil, love good.*)
 - a. Our definition of what is good and evil must match God's definition.

“Who or what is your objective authority setting your standards?”

2. Where you should get your definition of good and evil.
 - a. Government.
 - b. Culture.
 - c. You.
3. Judah had become complacent in their sin as to be ignorant of their spiritual condition (5:18)—they're looking forward to the day of the Lord?

VII. Chapter 7 visions.

- A. Two visions regarding possible future judgement, one undeserved mercy.
- B. Amos stands in the gap for Israel and God relents (7:1-6).
- C. The third vision—The plumb line.
 1. Plumb line = *a line (as of cord) that has at one end a weight (such as a plumb bob) and is used especially to determine verticality; a line directed to the center of gravity of the earth : a vertical line.*
 2. God is the true plumb line—All of life is to be measured by and through Him.

Being the plumb line, GOD AND ONLY GOD DETERMINE WHAT IS TRUE!

VIII. How do we navigate through a crooked and perverse culture?

- A. Philippians 2:14-16—4 **Do all things without complaining or arguments; 15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16 holding firmly the word of life, [THE PLUMBLINE!] so that on the day of Christ I can take pride because I did not run in vain nor labor in vain.**
- B. Warning—We live in a crooked generation—don't be crooked!
- C. Calling—to shine like “lights”.

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The Book of Amos

Sermon Notes

Please turn in your Bibles to the book of Amos..... this is our third minor prophet... we began with Hosea a most unusual situation where God told Hosea His prophet to go marry a prostitute... This was all a living picture, a living illustration of the relationship God had with His unfaithful people Israel.

Hosea was a great picture of grace, mercy, forgiveness...

Joel was a prophet, warning Israel about the coming **day of the Lord**... the great inevitable judgement God would bring onto an unrepentant people.... all was in the setting of a lesser judgement that had already taken place... which is the backdrop for the prophesy... the devastation of locust....

Locust sent by God to devastate anything and everything green... all the crops.. vegetation... trees.... With meant no food ...all was to get their attention... to bring a strayed, idolatrous people back to Him...

A prostitute... locusts... **what's with Amos?**... before we see somethings regarding his message to his people... what about Amos the man?... one thing we notice as we travel through the pages of scripture is that God for the most part uses the average... the common... the simple individual to do His work...

There are some exceptions... Abraham... Solomon... I think you could put Moses in there... but for the most part he used the commoner... shepherders... tent makers... fisherman... this is all a part of a principle God lays out through the apostle Paul in 1st Corinthians 1:26-29

26 For consider your calling, brothers and sisters, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the insignificant things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no human may boast before God.

Think about those words... God is not worried about looking good when He selects His prophets... He's not concerned about social status of His preachers... or how impressive their resume is... or their stage presence... God for the most part chooses the **weak things**... the **foolish things**... foolish in the eyes of the world... and the **insignificant things**.... To do His work...

Amos exemplifies all those descriptions... what we know about Amos is limited to this book... he is not found any other place in the Bible... Verse 1 tells us just how average Amos was... **1. The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa...**

As we've noted many times... names in the Bible are more than names... they are a description of who the person is, what he does or his purpose in life... much more than a name... Amos translated means "burden"... a large burden.

Why would a parent name their child "burden"... doesn't seem like a nice name for a child!... What *should we name our child? How about big burden...* possibly the parents had some insight that their child would grow up and because of his devotion to God will carry with him a big burden for God's people.

It says here that he was from a small town called Tekoa.... Which is about 27 miles north of Potlatch... Actually Tekoa in Amos was about 12 miles south of Bethlehem... in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.... Remember that Israel has separated into two kingdoms.... The northern kingdom called "Israel" and the Southern kingdom called "Judah"...

Make note that sometimes the prophets refer to both nations as "Israel"

Amos was not a prophet by vocation... he didn't attend the prophet school... in chapter 7:14... he admits just how common he was... he says "**I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet: for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs.**"

Amos herded sheep and was a fig picker!... sycamore trees in Israel are different than our sycamore trees... not even related actually... these trees would produce a hard fruit that grows on the trunk and limbs of the tree.

That hard fruit was "fig-like"... but not a fig like you and I think of figs... they were edible but not that great tasting... it was considered food for the poor... the grower of sycamore figs would pick the fig... drill a hole in the outer skin to help make them less tough.... So Amos was a fig picker and a herdsman...

I haven't gone to seminary... I'm not a prophet... I don't come from a heritage of prophets... I'm a country simpleton.... I pick figs and herd sheep... Just a simple down home guy... black eyed peas and cornbread... biscuits and gravy

this is who God uses for most of His work.

Amos was a straight talker... most country boys are... *I tell it like I see it....* he shoots straight... people know right where they stand with guys like Amos... they are right out in the open... Amos has no problem in chapter 4:1 telling the women of Israel they are "**fat cows from Bashan**" in fact...

let me read the 1st three verses of chapter four so you can see just how straight forward Amos was:

READ 4:1-3

So...

(7:14) **“I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet: for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs....Verse 15 But Yahweh took me from following the flock, and Yahweh said to me **“God prophesy to My people Israel”**”**

God tells Amos to pack up his bags... get someone to take care of his sheep and figs... and go north to the other kingdom “Israel”... I find it interesting that God did this... sent a country boy from Tekoa to go to the north and preach to Israel...

God already had some of His prophets there... you would think He would just use them... He could have sent some of His more educated prophets living at that time... Isaiah!...Hosea... Jonah... Micah.... But he sends Amos...

What was Amos to prophesy to Israel?... any guesses?... how about coming judgement... God reveals this prophesy four different ways to Amos: 1. Oracles in chapters 1-2 2. Sermons in chapters 4:3-6.... Visions in chapter 7-9 and a promise in chapter 9.

Read Chapter 1:1-2

God gives Amos a vision of a coming judgement on Israel... write this down... these are God’s absolutes.... These were true in Amos’s day they’ve been true for all people since... and especially true today...for us...it is an underlying truth in all the prophets major and minor in the Bible.

1. The Lord will not cease until He has established righteousness and blessing in all the earth. [Then and now]

2. No sin goes unpunished—someone must pay will pay for the consequences of sin.

Because those two statements are true and absolute... God will do whatever it takes to bring them about.... In chapter one God begins revealing a coming judgement for the world... God denounces eight nations for their sin.....

Repeated eight times God says **“I will not turn back its punishment... I will not turn back its punishment.”**...

God’s patience has run out...now judgment is imminent....unless they repent....the first 6 are nations who violated and sinned against Israel... God’s people.... **1:3b, 6a, 9a, 11a, 13a, 2:1a, 4a,**

The final two nations are His own people....Judah and Israel.

Read Chapter 2:4-8

What this is saying is something like this.... *“!for three sins I’ve been merciful.... **But the fourth one... you’re going to pay!... You will experience My judgement... My patience has run out...**”*

The overall theme is obvious in Amos...it is a reoccurring theme throughout the prophets bot majors and minors... it was a theme in the previous two minor prophets, Hosea and Joel... and it

will be a theme if not THE theme in the next nine minor prophets.... the theme is judgment... there is a coming judgment and the judge is God.

The warning is actually chilling... for those who have turned their back on God... To those who have replaced the true almighty God for other gods... for the one who has sinned and does not have atonement... For the one who is unrepentant...

The main message in Amos can be seen in **chapter 4**... God has sent all sorts of calamity in Israel's face... all designed to get their attention... evaluate their sinful lives and repent...

Three times...**READ 9b 10b 11b**

So Amos says.... After warning after warning to repent...to turn from your sin...4:12b **Prepare to meet your God o Israel!....Judgment is coming.**

[consider what he is saying..... prepare to meet your God...think how much you prepare for when a guest is going to stay a week at your house... that isn't anything!...what is it going to be like the day each one of us meets Almighty God...I guarantee you if this reality becomes a reality in your life it will change your priorities!]

Judgement and Discipline

I want to take some time to make sure we're all on the same page regarding God's judgement... in that all the prophets warn of impending judgment... we need to be clear about judgement...

Of first importance is to make a distinction between Divine punishment as a result of Divine judgment.... and Divine Discipline... or chastisement...some categorize God's divine discipline as a form of judgement... suggesting two types of judgement... judgement for punishment... judgement to discipline. [Others say, "no divine discipline is NOT judgement...]

If you are sitting there now worried over God's impending judgment and His punishment...because... remember... the prophets are warning Israel of a somewhat near future judgement....at the same time referring to a future judgement that hasn't taken place yet... so we need to pay attention to the prophet as well.... listen carefully.

1. Sin always has consequences... Romans 5: tells us that all of mankind has sinned and sins... **12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all mankind, because all sinned—**

A little later in Romans 6:23 the results of sin is death... eternal, spiritual death is God's punishment for our sin... every human being who has ever lived... who lives or will live will be judged for their sins... **unless they are in Jesus Christ**... with that judgment is punishment....now this is important...

2. God's people can never by any possibility be punished for their sins... God has already punished the believer's sin on the cross that Jesus spilt His blood on.... Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ put Himself on the cross as our substitute.... That's what we mean when we speak of "*substitutionary atonement*"....

Jesus substituted Himself for us to suffer the full punishment for sin and our guilt... 1 John 1:7

7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Neither God's perfect justice or His perfect love will ever permit Him to require any more payment for our sins than what Jesus did on that cross.... So... write this in your brains... if you ***are a Christian YOU will NEVER be punished for your sins!***

Some of you are sitting there thinking... "well, it sure feels like I'm being punished for my sins... life has been tough... life is hard... I've been going through trial after trial...I feel as though God is punishing me!"

That brings us in to God's discipline or His chastisement... God disciplines those He loves.... Those who are adopted into His family as His children.... Hebrews 12:5-7

5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are [punished] reprov[ed]...[when He shows you your fault...exposes you] by Him; 6 For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He [punishes] scourges [to accuse you] every son whom He accepts. 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is here whom his father does not discipline?"

The difference between punishment in judgement and God's discipline lies NOT in the nature of the sufferings of the afflicted... for those being judged it is a bad day.... For those being disciplined could be a very bad day... even though both days may be equally as bad.... There's an important distinction between the two....

When God "punishes" in judgment.... God is being the judge.....

When God disciplines His children.... God is being a loving Father...

Punishment can NEVER fall on upon the child of God in the judicial sense because his guilt was transferred to Christ...1 Peter 2:24 **24 and He Himself brought our sins in His body up on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness; by His wounds you were healed.**

But that doesn't mean that the child of God won't feel pain from their sins!... but the pain is not punishment... it is chastisement... chastisement is to bring a wayward child back to the Father...anytime you sin you are going away from the Father....discipline is to train a child into holiness... it is proof that God loves you...it produces obedience.... Endurance to live a life pleasing to God...

Punishment in judgment flows out of God's anger... the other out of His love... Divine punishment is NEVER sent for the good of sinners but for the honoring of God and His law...

Discipline is ALWAYS for the good of His children... A.W. Pink theologian at the turn of the 19th to 20th century wrote: *When the believer is smarting under the rod let him not say, God is*

now punishing me for my sins...that can never be!...That is most dishonoring to the blood of Christ... God is correcting thee in love, not smiting in wrath...

So... week after week as we look at the judgments of God... and as we see that there is an ominous future judgement on the horizon which the prophets are revealing to us... if you are in Christ... Covered by His blood... you will escape any form of His divine punishment... BUT...and we read these pending judgement we should be evaluating our relationship with Christ.

If you are outside of Christ... If you are not covered by His blood... listen careful to these prophets warnings!... For all of us... God wants our attention to our sin...chapter 5:4 **Seek Me that you may live...6 Seek Yahweh (Lord) that you may live.**

What does it take in our lives for God to get our attention?...what does it take for the people of Israel to finally surrender to the Lord?...in the middle of all this... we get what I think is the meat of the message of Amos... at least it is the message I think we all need to hear...

In chapter five... God inserts the answer to all of this... He gives Israel... His children a very, very clear message... what He has been saying is... *"this is what you've been doing... Nothing has changed.... You're still doing it...I've done a bunch of things to get your attention but you wouldn't listen..*

"I even pulled out my plague card like I did in Egypt... I sent locusts... and you didn't listen.... You still have not returned to me.....you've lost your crops... you've been in famine.... You've been in drought...

Return.... Turn around... turn around from where you have been going and come back to Me!...repentance!... but you didn't listen and you didn't do!"... I was hoping you would all kind of connect the dots... 'everything that is happening to us is much like what happened to all the other relatives in the past that strayed from the one true almighty God.....Hmmmmmmm..... But NO!

What does it take for God to get our attention?... what does it take for these people to change course and turn from the direction that is NOT working to a direction that does?...to repent...to surrender...?

In chapter five God inserts the remedy for all this... judgment is coming... you really don't want to go through that.... So here's the way you can circumvent all this...

[Ch.5:14-15) Seek good and not evil so that you can live.... Hate evil, love good.... This is simple is it not?... God put the cookies on the bottom shelf... *do good.... Hate evil... do good... hate evil... hate evil... do good.*

If you want things to be different... if you want your world to start clicking... working the way it should work... **RENOUNCE THINGS THAT ARE EVIL... AND DO WHAT IS GOOD!**

Here's the problem.... And my apologies to our Sunday evening ethics class because this is pretty much the theme of that class.... God makes it simple.... ***Do good hate evil***.... Most of us... most of the world would say "*yeah, that's right*"...

I guess it's been nine, ten days since the Supreme Court of the Land made a most amazing and controversial decision to overturn Roe V Wade... If you were like me...you were excited... you turned on whatever news you turn on to hear about the details and see the response of the nation.... We've been concerned about the response haven't we?

As I was watching some of the various news channels... and I intentionally watched several to not be persuaded by some agenda.... The one thing that stood out was this:... there is a huge divide in what is considered to be right and wrong.

There were those horrified at the decision... emotions exceeding room temperature over the decision.... "*it is wrong to take away the rights of women to CHOOSE what to do with that baby in the womb*"....*this is a travesty in American justice for the rights of women*"

others were ecstatic over the decision... morality.... ***What is right and good... has prevailed....***
It is good to protect the life of the unborn.

That controversy sheds vibrant light on the problem... the real issue... both sides of that argument would scream *seek good and not evil... hate evil, love good!*.... **the real issue is the lack of understanding the terms good and evil**....the lack of understanding what is truly good.... And what is truly evil!

What if your idea of what is good and what is evil is NOT what God's idea of good and what is evil? THAT IS THE PROBLEM IN THIS NATION...the only way you can think aborting babies is good is to be ignorant of God or remove Him entirely of the equation....

This is Israel's problem... THEY DECIDED *THEY* KNEW BEST AND THAT THEY WOULD DEFINE WHAT IS RIGHT AND WHAT IS WRONG...

It starts with you loving good and hating evil.... But you have to be on the same page.... Not with me... not with the government... not with your friends...not with culture... not even with your spouse... but with your God.

God is saying to Israel through Amos... *if you are on the same page with ME... we can work all this out.... We have a remedy for your problem.....* that is to Israel... but it is to us as well... I'm going to give you a vitally important question for you to answer.... How you answer this question is going to determine your future!

You must understand and answer this question to be able to understand what is truly right and what is wrong... ponder the question... "**who or what is your objective authority setting your standards?**"

So we're understanding each other... objective as opposed to subjective... objective means based on the facts... based on an outside higher authority other than my understanding, feelings, or opinions.....

Subjective is the opposite... it is basing truth on my feelings... my opinions... my personal perspective...and convictions... if all of us base our values...our morals... our idea of what is good and evil subjectively.... There would be some 150 differing ideas of what is good and what is evil resulting in 150 different sets of morals and values.

Who is your OBJECTIVE authority setting your standards?...what do you base your definition of what is right and wrong.... Good and evil on?... let me tell you some things you should not set as that authority:

1. **Government**—government is always in flux...Government two years ago was a completely different government in power today... if you think the government has an objective source for morality you need to open your eyes...
2. **Culture**—culture is always in flux...what the majority believes and is passionate about changes with the wind.... Culture follows fashion...
3. **“You and I”**.... we are NOT objective... we change with the wind...we have moods... we have irrational responses based on emotions...we don't have all the information...we're sinners!...

The only truly objective authority... is the One who has all the information... ALL THE KNOWLEDGE!...knows all the future... all powerful Almighty God!... and yet... according to the news of today... the greatest threat to society is the Christian God of the Bible... because of His objectivity!

Because He is the author of exclusive unchanging absolute truth...to this person **it is right and good** to have sexual diversity.... That person over there says **it is good** to change your gender if you feel like it... the person over there says it is good to have same sex marriages

[Osaka Japan was criticized by the American press this last week for defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman... making same sex marriage illegal...however... Japan probably wasn't as concerned as to what was right or wrong... but they have a big problem... their population is shrinking at an alarming rate...

Japan is facing what is not wrongly called an existential crisis here. It actually is looking at a crisis as to whether it will have a national future because of a declining birth rate....The last thing Japan can afford right now is to say a man can be married to a man or a woman to a woman.

Apparently same sex marriage has an effect on the birth rate!... they said that **marriage between a man and a woman is completely consistent with the natural law**.... Marriage works when it follows God's absolute design and guidelines.... Objective authority is a good thing!.... things work right!]

God is the ONLY objective authority.... Amos as a messenger of God is showing Israel that their idea of right and wrong.... Good and evil are not right and not good!...God is saying through Amos... As long as it is YOUR definition of what is good and what is evil... the future does not look good for you!....*If your definition is My definition.... And you **Seek good and not evil... Hate evil, love good**..... you have a chance!*... But Israel doesn't listen.... In their opinion... they're good!... in their opinion everything is JUST FINE!

6:1 Woe to those who are at ease in Zion...and to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria.... The northern kingdom Israel is doomed.... They won't repent.... The southern kingdom has bought some time.... but Amos is warning them here... **Woe to those who are at ease in Zion.**

"All is good... all is fine..."... nothing wrong here!... no need to be in a hurry to obey God's voice... no need to hurry up and repent from our sins....

This should speak to us today.... Indifference to God while playing religion is not good!... keeping God as a part of your life... is not going to play out well... Israel (all of Israel north and south... a few verses earlier 5:18—**Woe, you who are longing for the day of Yahweh**...

Not only are they indifferent to God... they think they're ready for Him to show up...remember 4:12?...**Prepare to meet your God O Israel!**... they are blind!... *"Come on down God!"*... they don't see their sin... they don't see their rejection of the Holy One... woe to you who are longing for the day of Yahweh...

H.A. Ironside (last century) said something insightful *"It is remarkable how low people can fall and yet how religiously and piously they can talk..."* AS wretchedly vile as was Israel's condition, still found among them were those who professed their desire for the day of the Lord!...That terrible day when God will cast His judgement on the evil ones.

Let's close at one of Amos's final visions in chapter 7

God just shows Amos three visions... the first two are visions about impending judgement... the last one is about undeserved mercy...V.1 **"thus the Lord showed me..."** V.4 **Thus the Lord showed me...** V.7 **"Thus He showed me"...**

Read 7:1-2

God shows Amos future calamity for Israel...but Amos engages the Lord with a plea to have mercy on the people and not carry out this locust swarm....

Read verse 3

Again...

Read verse 4

God shows Amos a future judgement on Israel.... Amos sees and then again pleads for mercy for his people...

Read verses 5-6

Why did God relent?... why did God both times extend His mercy to Israel?... Amos stood in the gap...he prayed... He pleaded to God on behalf of his people...don't underestimate your prayer before God... it may be because of YOUR prayers that God "changes His mind" over some action.

Now... the third vision is a wall that had been made with a plumb line... and God is holding the plumb line... you know what a plumb line is...

a line (as of cord) that has at one end a weight (such as a plumb bob) and is used especially to determine verticality...a line directed to the center of gravity of the earth : a vertical line

Builders of buildings and walls use a plum-line to make sure they are vertical... a wall made without one is going to be tilting or leaning... ready to fall over You can't eyeball a wall under construction.... You have to have a standard... a plumb line is the standard... everything is measured and aligned with the plumb line.

Read verses 7-8

"I'm not going to overlook their sins anymore...I am sitting in their midst a plumbline" ...they will measure their sins against me,...I will be their measure ...their standard from now on...they MUST decide that their lives and values would be measured against Me.... they understand who I am and what I require"

Anything and everything NOT aligned with God is crooked!...in fact... interesting that in construction trades... builder lingo... something that is lined up correctly...is called "true"... if a wall is "true" it is perfectly vertical.....

In that sense... God being the plumb line HE AND ONLY HE DETERMINES WHAT IS TRUE!

All of life must be measured by the one and only true plumbline... God...if they would call that which is evil was that which God called evil..... and called good what God called good... then they would be vertically true!

This speaks to us today... God is the perfect standard to measure all of life by... unfortunately today standards... the plumb line is man not God... and notice how everything is upside down?...gender issues... same sex marriage... abortion...

Did you listen to the Declaration of Independence this morning? ... the very basis for common law in America was derived from "*the laws of nature and nature's God*"... these words referred to a section in William Blackstone's Commentaries on Law published back in 1770 that said "*The will of God for His creation as revealed in the Holy Scriptures...*"

Our country was founded with God as our plumb line... now we have crooked leaning walls falling down.... So what do we do?... remember Philippians 2:14-16

4 Do all things without complaining or arguments; 15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16 holding firmly the word of life, [THE PLUMBLINE!] so that on the day of Christ I can take pride because I did not run in vain nor labor in vain.

Warning... we live in a crooked generation....don't be crooked with it... Have God as your plumbline.

Calling... To shine like lights.... Being a living testimony for Christ