

Amos – Sermon 14 – The Judgment of the Judge – Amos 9:1-6

Intro:

1) Word picture – Judge attire

- a. When you see this attire – you immediately know what it represents
 - i. A judge
- b. When a judge takes their seat behind the bench, we expect certain things from them
 - i. We expect the judge to know the law
 - ii. We expect the judge to uphold the law
 - iii. We expect the judge to condemn what is wrong and uphold what is right
 - iv. When guilt is established, we expect the judge to render a just sentence
- c. In fact – if a person stood before a judge unquestionably guilty of a terrible crime, and the judge simply lets that person walk – we do not praise the judge's expression of love, we condemn the judge's action of injustice

2) Strangely – when it comes to God – our culture wants a Judge who does not uphold justice and right the wrongs

- a. Culture is comfortable talking about a God who loves, comforts, forgives, befriends, and blesses
 - i. And God certainly does those things
- b. But Scripture also reveals something about God that our world – and sometimes modern Christianity – is uncomfortable acknowledging
 - i. God is a Just Judge
 - ii. He is perfectly holy
 - iii. He knows the Law, He wrote the Law
 - iv. He cannot be bribed, manipulated, deceived, or overruled
 - v. He is perfectly good and acts in that goodness perfectly
- c. Truth – God take sin seriously

3) That is the God Amos sees in Amos 9

- a. For 8 chapters, the Lion has been roaring
 - i. God has warned Israel
 - ii. God has called Israel
 - iii. God has disciplined Israel
 - iv. God has given them opportunity to return to Him
- b. Yet – they would not listen or obey
- c. When Amos receives his final vision – he no longer sees locust, he doesn't see fire, he doesn't see a plumb line, or a basket of fruit
 - i. Amos sees the Judge standing at the altar rendering out judgment

4) This last vision Amos records emphasizes a shift from God warning Israel to God acting against Israel

- a. Amos 9 forces us to come to grips with a truth that the loving God who invites sinners to repent is also the Sovereign Judge who take sins seriously when His warnings are ignored and rejected
- b. Why does this matters to you – because what we believe about God as Judge determines:
 - i. How seriously we take our sin
 - ii. How rightly we worship Him
 - iii. How fully we submit ourselves to Him

5) Reality – if we lose sight of God as Judge, it won't be long before we lose sight of the seriousness of sin

- a. Sermon – The Judgment of the Judge
- b. Text – Amos 9:1-6

The Seriousness of His Judgment – V1

1) This closing chapter opens up with the last vision of the book which contains the theme and overtone of great judgment

- a. V1
- b. What we note right off the bat – There's a seriousness to this judgement

The Presence of the Judge

1) You'll notice this vision differs from the previously recorded visions of the book

- a. The structure differs:
 - i. It doesn't start with the same introduction "The Lord GOD shewed me"
 - 1. There's a holy brevity to this vision – it's stern
 - ii. Notice there's no dialogue – just gets straight to the point
- b. The content differs
 - i. Amos did not see an image form the natural world in connection to God's judgment (locust, fire, plum line, fruit)
 - ii. Rather – Amos sees God Himself

2) It's important to detail how God is spoken of here in the text

- a. Lord – Adonia – name of God emphasizing Him as Master, Ruler, Owner, Sovereign
 - i. Amos does not initially use the name YahWeh, but rather starts with the name that emphasizes God's authority
 - ii. Interesting name choice – Israel has been rejecting God's authority all this time
 - iii. The name reminds us – Israel is not simple resisting another religious leader or advisor
 - 1. They are consistently rebelling against the One with the eternal jurisdiction to Judge
- b. Standing – means stationed, established, to be firm
 - i. The tense used emphasizes a continued, simple action
 - ii. This pictures God as stationed and ready to act
 - 1. IOW – He's taken His stand
 - iii. Interesting – In previous visions we hear what God would "send"
 - 1. Here we read not of what God sends, but how God shows up
 - 2. IOW – the same God who declared "The LORD will roar from Zion" (1:2) and "I will punish you for all your iniquities" (3:2) now appears personally in judgment
- c. The picture before us is not of an impulsive judgment motivated by heated emotions
 - i. Israel has repeatedly been given merciful warnings and opportunities
 - 1. Yet, "we have not returned unto me" – Chp 4
- d. Because Israel has not returned back to God in grace and mercy, God shows up in judgment

The Placement of the Judgment

1) Amos says God is “upon the altar” issuing out the judgement

2) Understand – this is a perplexing, even a confusing scene to the original audience

- a. “What at unexpected sight”
- b. First – God is seen here in public – at the altar
 - i. Normally – in worship – His presence would be behind the thick veil
 - ii. No doubt this sight would have conjured up the question – What was God doing out in view of the public at the altar
- c. Second – the altar carried certain themes to it that are not represented here
 - i. Altar was a place of sanctity and forgiveness
 - ii. Altar was a place where God’s wrath was satiated for the time
 - iii. Altar was a place which represented peace and pleasurable acceptance with God
 - iv. Altar was a place of fellowship restored
 - v. In some cases - Altar was a place of protection
 1. Ex. 21:13,14 – 1 Kings 1:50,51; 1 Kings 2:28,29
 - vi. Here – the altar is used in connection to the wrath-filled judgment of God
- d. Point out – the fact that this takes place at the altar carries a message
 - i. The very place they believed connected them closer to God was the very place God used to confront them in judgment
 - ii. Truth – the text says “the” altar
 1. We are not told with specificity which altar its refereeing to
 2. However – implicitly, we can assume it refers to the altar at Bethel
 - a. Amos 3:4 – God plans to visit the altars of Bethel
 - b. Amos 4:4 – sarcastically issues a call of worship at Bethel
 - c. Amos 5:5 – told not to seek Bethel
 - d. Amos 7:13 – Amaziah calls Bethel the “Kings chapel”
 - iii. So this vision does not suddenly introduce some obscure altar
 1. Rather it takes place at the very location Israel’s hypocritical worship had been taking place all along
 - iv. Sentence – the very place where their sins were supposed to be removed became the place where their sins were judged
 1. The very place they thought proved God was with them becomes the very place God demonstrates His wrath against them

The Proclamation of Judgment

1) In V1, God is clearly demolishing their place of worship and all that are attending

- a. Smite the lintel
 - i. Smite – to strike with force
 - ii. Lintel of the door – not 100% what part of the construct is being referred to
 - 1. But it is clear it is some significant structural aspect of the building
 - iii. Posts may shake – what was stable is not unstable
 - 1. The strike has caused the entire structure to collapse
 - iv. “The picture is of the sanctuary being violently destabilized from top to bottom”

2) What’s unique about this scene – we are not told who it is the Lord is commanding to carry this striking out

- a. Many commentators suggest – an angel
 - i. Probably so
 - 1. It does the Lord’s bidding
 - 2. They have to be powerful enough to cause the temple to fall
 - 3. They have to enter in and accomplish the task without being overthrown
- b. Don’t miss the point though
 - i. The fact that this person is left unnamed and unintroduced is intentional
 - 1. Its theological
 - ii. The focus of the judgment doesn’t rest on who is carrying it out – but rather on who is issuing the orders
 - 1. The Master standing upon the altar!
 - iii. Important to grasp – it doesn’t matter how this judgment is carried out
 - 1. Physically through earthquake and enemy
 - 2. What matters – it is the Sovereign God who is orchestrating it all

3) Notice how the judgment is catastrophic and comprehensive

- a. Catastrophic – “cut them in the head, all of them”
 - i. Cut – to cut off, main idea of the word is to tear something to pieces
 - ii. Phrase pictures the collapsing building falling on the attenders killing them
- b. Comprehensive
 - i. Q – what if some survive?
 - ii. V1c – God will slay them
- c. Notice how Amos stresses the inescapability
 - i. He that fleeth....shall not flee away
 - ii. He that escapeth....shall not be delivered

4) This vision is no longer a warning – its an announcement of final disaster

The Scope of God's Judgment – V2-4

- 1) **I love the way the Psalmist talks about God's presence in Ps. 139:7-12**
 - a. Comforting, reassuring, secured
- 2) **Amos also talks about God's attribute of omnipresence – but his revelation carries a much different tone**
 - a. Main idea – No distance is beyond His reach of judgement, no place can hide you from God's judgment, and no circumstance is beyond His authority that He cannot render judgment
- 3) **Q – What would you do if you just learned that God is going to show up and render great, catastrophic, comprehensive judgment on sin?**
 - a. Same thing Adam and Eve did – run and hide
 - b. That's what we see as the tempting response of the Israelites – which God addresses

There is no distance beyond God's reach – V2

- 1) **Amos begins this section with 2 extremes – hell and heaven**
- 2) **Textual insight**
 - a. Dig – dig through, to burrow, to break in to
 - i. This picture is not of an accidental descent, but of a purposeful, frantic effort
 - b. Hell – Sheol
 - i. Many questions arise when this word is used
 - ii. Term occurs 65x's in the OT
 - iii. 60 of those occurrences are in poetic passages
 - iv. Sheol is referred to 45x's in connection with death or as a reference to death
 1. Sheol and death are paralleled synonymously 17x's
 - v. Sheol is used to refer to hell 20x's
 - vi. So what does it mean – can suggest a reference to an eternal destination reserved for the wicked, but in general, it is used to refer to death and the grave
 - vii. Here – it is used hyperbolically in contrasting language to refer to the lowest point they sought to go
 - c. Idea – even if they burrowed downward to the deepest imaginable realm – they could not escape God
- 3) **Notice – Amos reverses the language and references heaven**
 - a. Climb – ascend, to go up
 - b. Heaven – to be lofty, often refers to the sky
 - i. Could mean heaven like God's dwelling place - Could mean heaven like the sky
- 4) **Taken together – this is deliberate merism**
 - a. Two opposite extremes compared to make a point and refer to everything in between
 - i. Rising and setting sun – Dan to Beersheba
- 5) **Notice the verbs describing God's response**
 - a. Take – to seize, grasp, to capture, to exercise authority over
 - b. Bring them down – be taken down, to descend
- 6) **Idea here- though to run to the lowest conceivable place to the highest conceivable place – you cannot escape God's judgment**

There's no disguise beyond His recognition – V3

1) Interesting Amos moves from the metaphysical to the physical

- a. The scenery changes here
 - i. V2 asks – How far can you go
 - ii. V3 asks – How well can you hide
 - 1. Hide themselves – try to conceal, withdraw from sight

2) A reader may ask – why use Mt. Carmel in this illustration?

- a. There were other higher mountains – Hermon, Tabor
- b. Reality:
 - i. Mt. Carmel is still very high so the point is still made
 - ii. Mt. Carmel is not only high but boasts of dense vegetation, forests, caved, ravines, and rugged terrain easy for hiding
 - 1. Which is the point
 - iii. It meets the Mediterranean which sets up the next part of the message
 - iv. It carries a significant spiritual emphasis with judgment on idolatrous worship

3) Notice what God does when the people run to Carmel to hide

- a. “I will search”
 - i. Search – carries idea of examining, seeking diligently
- b. Lesson – God doesn’t have to search because He is unaware of where they are hidden
 - i. The phrase emphasizes – no matter where they attempt to hide, they cannot remain hidden from the all-knowing and all-seeing God

4) Once again – Amos uses the extreme

- a. V3 – the bottom of the sea
- b. The merism and repetition of merism is intentional
 - i. God is systematically eliminating every image of their self-seeking refuge in light of His judgment

5) Note – V3c

- a. Serpent – in this context – some sea creature or deadly sea serpent
 - i. The specific animal is not the point
- b. The vital phrase is – “I will command”
 - i. IOW – even in the inaccessible depths of the sea – creation still obeys its’ Creator
 - 1. In contrast to Israel
 - ii. Even if they attempt to use creation to hide from God, they’ll discover creation still answers to the Creator”

There's no deliverance beyond His rule – V4

1) V4 contains unique imagery – Isreal uses captivity to attempt to evade God's judgment

- a. Historically – captivity was not viewed as a positive thing
 - i. Egypt
 - ii. Reveals how corrupted and twisted their thinking was
 - 1. Captivity was a better solution than repentance
 - 2. However – we think the same way
 - a. What has you in captivity that you won't repent of?

2) Understand what is being emphasized here

- a. Even if some survived the temple catastrophe
- b. Even if some survived the initial invasion of the sword
- c. Captivity does not mean they are now outside of God's reach
 - i. Captivity would have taken them out from the Promised Land to the land of another people and another "god"
 - ii. Still there – God is Ruler
 - 1. He is not bound by location or nation

3) Notice how God shows up

- a. To render calamity or disaster (evil)
- b. He has come to render judgment

The Supremacy of the Judge – V5,6

1) Given Amos' message of Israel's total annihilation – the audience would no doubt have has some doubts

- a. Are the claims legitimate?
- b. Why should they listen to Amos, the southern prophet?
- c. After all – Israel is at her peak with a military that is far superior to her neighbors
- d. "Israel was strong, maybe even invincible in the eyes of some
 - i. How could such terrible things even happen?
- e. V5,6 address those types of questions and that type of attitude

Amos reminds them that God's position demands reverence

2) Lord GOD of hosts

- a. Lord – Adonia – Master, Ruler, Sovereign
- b. GOD – YahWeh – the covenantal God
- c. Hosts – armies, forces
- d. This is an extraordinary introduction – He's the Supreme Commander who possesses unlimited authority and resources
 - i. This title pales Israel in comparison

3) Why is this title so impactful here?

- a. Israel had been treating God casually – whereas Amos speaks of Him majestically
- b. Israel had reduced, in their minds, that the Sovereign Lord of heaven tolerates idols, accepts hypocritical worship, will be easily overthrown from His throne, and will look the other way from injustice
- c. Amos says – He's the Lord God of hosts

Amos reminds them that God's power demands reverence

1) V5 reminds us that God's simple touch is power-filled

- a. He merely touches creation and it melts
- b. Touch – make contact with, expresses ease
 - i. A bit of scary undertones here
 - 1. All He has to do is touch creation and it melts
 - 2. Look how He handles rebellious Israel – "hand shall take them"
- c. Idea presented here – Creation itself moves at God's command
 - i. The imager presents God doing what man cannot do
 - ii. Israel attempts to hide in Mt. Carmel – God created Mt. Carmel

Amos reminds them that God's possessions demand reverence

- 1) God builds a tow-story dwelling place for Himself**
- 2) Founded his troop in the earth**
 - a. Troop – foundations, structure
 - b. In the building context here – it appears that's what is meant
- 3) Can such a Builder not destroy the earth?**
 - a. Can He not easily destroy an earthly temple built by human hands?
 - b. Can the One who controls the waters not put an end to Israel's rebellion?
- 4) To make the point very clear – Amos closes making sure they know God's name**

The Submission He Demands – Application

1) Challenge to - Take sin seriously

- a. Amos 9 beings with God at the altar in judgment
- b. Israel had received warning after warning – yet continued in rebellion
- c. God’s patience didn’t mean He changed His opinion about their sin
- d. Israel failed to take their sin seriously
- e. 1 Pet. 1:15,16 – we believers should strive for holiness – practically

2) Challenge to – See God rightly

- a. Israel’s problem wasn’t that they had stopped worshipping
 - i. They were worshipping while possessing a distorted view of the One, True God
- b. Amos has presented God as: holy, sovereign, powerful, Lord, and Judge
 - i. In V5,6 Amos deliberately presents a vivid picture of God
 - 1. One which Israel had forgotten
- c. Truth – casual worship often begins with a causal view of God
 - i. You get it in His Word

3) Challenge to – Respond while God is speaking

- a. One of the sobering things about Amos 9 is all that had happened before Amos 9
 - i. God gave His law, His preachers, His examples, His disciplines
 - ii. Yet – Israel would not respond in repentance
- b. Eventually – Amos says “I saw the Lord standing upon the altar”
 - i. The warning has shifted to judgment
- c. Truth – conviction is not something to resent, its something to respond to
 - i. Don’t wait for God’s warnings in your life to become a judgment over your life
- d. Some of you in this room know what God has been saying to you
 - i. It’s time to respond

4) Challenge to – Run to Christ

- a. This text is clear – you cannot escape God’s wrath by your own ability
 - i. Amos uses merism to communicate totality
 - 1. Sheol and heaven
 - 2. Top of Carmel to bottom of sea
 - 3. Home to captivity
 - ii. The message is clear – there is nowhere the rebellious sinner can go to escape God’s wrath
- b. John 3:36 says about your life right now
- c. But the Gospel provides a great reversal
 - i. Text reveals – nothing can separate you from the wrath of God on your sin
 - 1. Not heights above, nor depths below
 - ii. Gospel reveals – because Jesus satisfied the wrath of God for your sin
 - 1. Rom. 3:38,39