

What On Earth Is Happening? Hopeful Insights From Amos

Nationalism, Exceptionalism, and Boastful Leaders

Amos 6:1–14

Sunday Evening Bible Study, October 13, 2017

Attendance Watch for Amos:

9.10.17	241
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10.1.17	204
10.8.17	153

Amos 1:1–2:3: Amos starts with good news that God will judge Israel’s hostile, sinful neighbors.

Amos 2:4–16: But Israel is shocked to learn that God will judge them as well.

Amos 3:1–15: By failing to love God and neighbor, especially exploiting the poor and neglecting justice, Israel has earned God’s severe punishment.

Amos 4:1–13: Even Israel’s wealthy, self-indulgent women will not escape, as they join their husband’s stubborn resistance against God’s tough love.

Amos 5:1–27: Though Israel was sending rivers of ritualized and manipulative worship to God, what God really wanted was for Israel to send rivers of justice to their fellow citizens.

Amos 6:1–14: Nationalism, Exceptionalism, and Boastful Leaders

1. Self-Exalting Leaders

1.1 Self-confident leaders trust and boast in their military might and exaggerate their accomplishments (1,2).

1.2 Reality Check: Self-exalting leaders are self-deceived leaders who guide their “exceptional” nation to ruin (3).

2. Self-Indulgent Leaders

2.1 Self-serving leaders live in luxurious excess of furniture, food, entertainment, and cosmetics at the expense of the people they should serve and protect (4–6).

2.2 Reality Check: Self-adoring leaders are so preoccupied with their pleasure, they are oblivious to the gathering storm (7).

3. Self-Centered God (8)

3.1 God swears by himself, because there is no one greater.

3.2 God is justified in his self-centeredness for only he belongs there.

3.3 God hates human pride and is opposed to the proud who seek to steal his glory.

3.4 God hates the idols (“strongholds”) that proud people try to put in his place

3.5 God humbles the proud for his own glory and our own good.

The Humbling (9–14)

Summary: Boastful leaders of Israel, living self-indulgent lifestyles at the expense of people they should be protecting, and trusting in their own exaggerated achievements, incite God to raise up another nation to oppress and humble Israel.

The Liberal Left	The Conservative Right
<p>Favorite ex-NFL player: Colin Kaepernick</p> <p>America has never been greater!</p> <p>Expansive government is the best way to protect the poor.</p> <p>Raise taxes on the rich to provide goods and services for the poor.</p> <p>Redistribute wealth by legal coercion.</p> <p>People are poor because of systemic injustices in the social structure that help the privileged rich get richer and oppressed poor get poorer.</p> <p>Women are historically oppressed, so we should let them abort babies who would only keep women poor.</p> <p>Pride issue: I am entitled to the fruit of another person's labor because the system is not fair. I will blame everyone else for my problems.</p> <p>Political danger: The church is not allowed to influence the state (unless it agrees with my liberal policies).</p> <p>Intellectual Danger: I will remain safely in my echo chamber and avoid the intellectual effort required to listen to and understand conservatives (Pr. 18:17; Jas. 1:19).</p>	<p>Favorite ex-NFL player: Tim Tebow</p> <p>We need to make America great again!</p> <p>Limited government is the best way to protect the poor.</p> <p>Lower taxes (and cut the budget) to incentivize the work ethic, stimulate economy, and create jobs.</p> <p>Redistribute wealth by voluntary generosity.</p> <p>People are poor because they have made foolish, immoral, and irresponsible decisions.</p> <p>Children are historically oppressed, so we should protect them from their mothers by banning abortion.</p> <p>Pride Issue: I earned and deserve everything I have and nobody ever gave me anything. I will take credit for all of my accomplishments.</p> <p>Political danger: This is a Christian Nation and the church must influence the state to promote Christianity.</p> <p>Intellectual Danger: I will remain safely in my echo chamber and avoid the hard intellectual effort required to listen to and understand liberals (Pr. 18:17; Jas. 1:19).</p>

Six "Don'ts" of Political Persuasion

- 1. Don't insult people:** Insults are the weapons of the intellectually lazy. They divide groups and make people dig in. Attack the argument, not the person (ad hominem fallacy).(Mt. 5:22).
- 2. Don't misrepresent your opponent:** Misrepresentation marks you as deceptive or ignorant (straw man fallacy). People who think they "tell it like it is" usually don't.
- 3. Don't act like you can't learn anything.** Active listening and humility go a long way.
- 4. Don't appeal to an authority they don't recognize.** If they don't love the Bible, appeal to the rule of law, the Constitution, and the common good. (Mt. 22:32; Dan. 1:12; Acts 22:25).
- 5. Don't be a hypocrite.** Double standards decrease your credibility. Apply your moral judgments consistently, without fear or favor. If you criticized the conduct of a person who holds different political views, you must criticize the same conduct of a person who holds your political views. (Mt. 23:24; Jn. 8:7; Mt. 7:5).
- 6. Don't be careless with your words.** People who lie, exaggerate, slander, flatter, brag, boast, accuse without evidence, break vows, breach contracts, betray friends, and make bold promises or empty threats they don't keep, may be flamboyant enough to excite people who already hold their political positions, but they fail at persuading their political opponents to switch sides or make reasonable compromises.

[Jas. 1:19; Prov. 18:17; Matt.15:19; Eccl. 5:2; Pr. 26:18,19; 27:2; Ps. 34:13; James 4:16; Matt. 12:36; Prov. 15:2; Prov. 12:18; Psa. 12:3; James 3:5,6; Titus 3:2:1Pet. 2:12; 3:15; Eph. 4:15]