

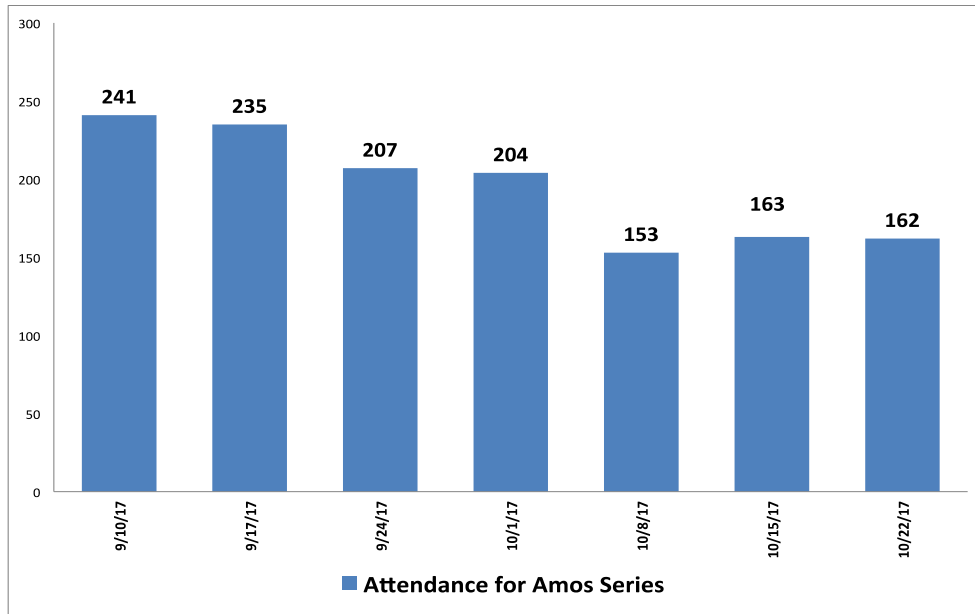
What On Earth Is Happening? Hopeful Insights From Amos

The Long-Deserved and Unstoppable Judgment of God

Amos 8:1–14

Sunday Evening Bible Study – October 29, 2017

Attendance Watch:



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: 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.

Amos 7:1–17: Through three visions, God shows Amos his future judgment, but mercifully postpones it when Amos intercedes for Israel. God measures Israel by the “plumb line” of his unchanging Word and finds them out of line. Amos is falsely accused by Amaziah, the falsehij priest, who flatters and panders to Jeroboam, the corrupt king.

Amos 8:1–14

After his ministry in Samaria (the political center) in chapters 1–6, Amos travels to Bethel (the religious center) to bring them the same message.

1. God’s patience has come to an end, just like fruit at the end of the summer (1–2).
2. Repeating the verdict for Bethel, Israel is guilty of:
 - 1.1 Failing to love God by committing spiritual adultery and blending false religions with true faith (3).
 - 1.2 Failing to love their neighbor by exploiting the poor through unethical business practices (4).
 1. These business people don’t work on Sabbath, but don’t seek God and can’t stop thinking about work and how to make more of the money they love.

2. At work, they use deception to steal, not giving the customer what they pay for (false advertising, deceptive claims, shortchanging, confusing and misleading statistics, false mark-ups and discounts, price fixing and collusion, predatory lending).
3. These practices especially hurt the poor who have little recourse for justice. The poor become further indebted and sell themselves or family members into slavery.
4. Biblical commands violated: Ex. 22:21-21; Deut. 16:11,14; 24:17-21; Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-15; Pr. 20:10; 11:1; 16:11.

3. Repeating the sentence for Bethel, Israel will receive justice from God (7–14).

- 3.1 Judgment is certain and thorough, like the Nile flooding every spring (7-8).
- 3.2 Judgment will reverse Israel's fortunes, like sundown at noon (9-10).
- 3.3 Judgment will give them what they thought they wanted: No word from God (11–12).
- 3.4 Be careful what you wish for.
 1. When a pastor does not preach the Word, he starves the people he is responsible to feed (2 Tim. 4:2).
 2. When people stop attending public worship and the preaching of the Word, it is because they are seeking to satisfy their hunger with idols (
 3. When there is a decline in churches that preach the Word, it may be God's judgment on a community or nation (Mk. 6:11).
- 3.5 Judgment will show them the foolishness of trusting in idols and remove idolatry from Israel forever (13–14).

4. Does God's judgment seem too severe?

- 4.1 "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" (Ro. 9:20). "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" (Ro. 11:34). "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" (1 Cor. 2:16). Now consider what the people of Israel actually believed:
- 4.2 Guilt (v.13) in Hebrew is Ashmah, and a play on the word, Asherah.
- 4.3 Asherah is the mother and mistress of the god Baal (Lord) the goddess of fertility.
- 4.4 When Baal and Asherah have sex, our fields and flocks become fertile and fruitful.
- 4.5 Through "sympathetic magic," if we have sex in the temples and shrines in front of Baal and Asherah, they will be influenced to have sex with each other and we will be blessed with prosperity.
- 4.6 To aid in our worship, we need temple prostitutes (1 Kings 14:23; 16:26; Hosea 4:14).
- 4.7 If our crops fail, it is because Baal and Asherah are angry, so we will appease Baal by sacrificing our children to him for economic reasons (Dt. 12:29-31; 18:9–10).
- 4.8 Since our prosperity is as sign that Baal is pleased with us, poor people must have done something to displease him. Poor people are poor because of their stupid decisions. Since Baal looks down on them, so can I.
- 4.9 Since we all worship the same God, Baal is the God who led us out of Egypt and Asherah is his wife. Or maybe they are separate, but surely God has the same attributes as Baal.
- 4.10 Now we have a God who is okay with us committing sexual immorality, demeaning the marriage covenant, killing our babies for economic reasons, loving money, and depriving the poor of justice! (Which is to say, they created a god in their own image).