

What On Earth Is Happening? Hopeful Insights From Amos and Obadiah

Unfriendly Borders and Welcome Warnings

Amos 1:1–2:3

Sunday Evening Bible Study – September 10, 2017

Overview of Amos

Prologue	8 Nations Indicted	3 Speeches of Judgment Against Israel	2 Oracles of Woe Against Israel	5 Visions of Judgment Against Israel	5 Promises of Hope for Israel
1:1–2	1:3–2:16	3:1–5:17	5:18–6:14	7:1–9:10	9:11–15
God uses whom he chooses.	God holds all nations accountable to his moral law, but Israel and Judah will have stricter judgment.	God always executes his punishment with just cause. Israel's sins are listed in the expanded indictment.	God's warnings are clear and Israel is without excuse. This nation is on its deathbed and the funeral is about to begin.	God drives his point home with visual aids: locusts, fire, plumb line, summer fruit, and the altar.	God made unconditional promises to Abraham and David, and he will keep them because he is good.

A Walk Through Amos 1:1–15

- 1–2 **Who:** As a fig-picking shepherd, Amos was a small businessman; a layman, not a professional prophet (Amos 7:14). This book reveals he was informed in theology, business, history and current events. By taking this message to Israel, he demonstrates godly guts.
What: The voice of the only true God, who meets with his people in the temple at Jerusalem, is about to speak through Amos to the nation of Israel.
When: About 760 B.C. During the Divided Kingdom. The king of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) is Uzziah. The king of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) is Jeroboam. "The earthquake" would have been known to the original hearers and readers (Zech. 14:5).
Where: Tekoa is near Bethlehem in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. God raises up a man in Judah to take a message to Israel.
- 3–5: Indictment against Damascus, capital of Aram (Syria) (North of Israel): Unjust war and brutal treatment of Gilead (murder, theft)
- 6–8: Indictment against Gaza, capital of Philistia (Southwest of Israel): Unjustly attacking, conquering, and selling human beings, murder, theft, coveting, human trafficking.
- 9–10 Indictment against Tyre (Northwest of Israel): Treaty-breaking; unjust war, false witness/vow breaking, murder, theft, coveting, human trafficking/slave trading.
- 11–12 Indictment against Edom: (Southeast of Israel): The descendants of Esau (Gen. 25:22-23) committed murder, unrighteous anger, grudge holding, feuding).
- 13–15 Indictment against Ammon (East of Israel). Unjust war; brutal terrorism, murder of non-combatant, abuse of women, murder of unborn babies, theft, coveting, greed.
- 2:1–3 Indictment against Moab (Southeast of Israel): Desecration of a human body to incite terror.

Common Errors In Studying the Prophets

1. **Error:** Old Testament prophets are obscure, unimportant, and irrelevant.

Truth: The Old Testament prophets are clear, important, and exceedingly relevant [2 Tim. 3:16; Acts 7:42 (Am. 5:25f); 15:16–17(Am. 9:11f)].

Relevant issues in Amos: God’s sovereignty, natural disasters, war, threats of war, social justice, racial supremacy, secure borders, immigration, fair wages, employee-employer relationships, terrorism, human trafficking, exploitation of the poor, class oppression, corruption in government, political division, prosperity theology, the decline of true worship, casual worship, religious hypocrisy, competing religions, the drift from sound doctrine, sexual immorality, moral confusion, self-indulgence, materialism, greed, and idolatry.

2. **Error:** The Old Testament God of wrath is different from the New Testament God of love.

Truth: God never changes. The God of both covenants is a God who loves perfectly and reveals his wrath righteously (Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17; Heb. 13:8; Lam. 3:22–23; Ro. 1:16–32).

3. **Error:** People in the Old Testament were saved by works while people in the New Testament are saved by grace.

Truth: At all times, according to Scripture alone, people are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone (Gen. 3:15; 2 Sam. 7:16; Amos 9:11; Ro. 4:2). They looked forward to the cross, we look backward to the cross, but we all look to the cross.

3. **Error:** The promises and warnings to Old Testament Israel automatically apply to the United States.

Truth: Some of the promises and warnings to Old Testament Israel apply *only* to Israel, while some can also be applied to the United States. But if they apply to the United States, they apply to all nations (including North Korea, Iran and Russia). The United States is more like Syria than Israel. Washington D.C. is more like Damascus than Jerusalem.

Truth: Though history has shown that the United States has been used by God in exceptional ways, the United States is not “exceptional” in a Biblical sense and it has no special covenant relationship with God. “Context is King” in determining what applies to the United States today. For example, God is still in the business of humbling nations who think their stability and prosperity is their own doing (3:6).

Truth: The warnings and promises to Old Testament Israel are more accurately applied to the New Testament church, the covenant people of God. The church is the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16) and a “holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9), having been “grafted in” to Old Testament Israel (Ro. 11:23). Just as Israel was surrounded by unbelieving nations who seduced and threatened them, so too, the church in the United States (or any other nation) is surrounded by unbelieving “nations” (unbelievers with various worldviews) who seduce and threaten us.