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Lessons from the **Book of Amos**

By Ken Raggio

God Uses Ordinary People Greatly

God specializes in using ordinary people. Amos was the first prophet after the kingdom of Israel was divided by Jeroboam, preceding even Isaiah and Hosea. He was not a priest or Levite. "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel," (7:14-15). Prepare yourself. God may want to use you.

Amos 1:1 - "The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa."

I Will Not Turn Away The Punishment

"For three transgressions... and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof..." God pronounced this judgment EIGHT TIMES in the first two chapters of Amos; on Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah and Israel. The punishment was similar for each nation except Israel. God said He would send a fire, devour their palaces, cut off their inhabitants, and cut off their rulers (kings, princes, etc.). Unrepented sins against the righteous God cannot go unpunished.

Amos 1:3 - "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof."

The Sins Of Israel In Amos' Day

Amos made a list of the sins for which God was going to punish Israel: 1.

Selling the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes - SLAVERY. 2. Man and father taking the same maid - INCEST. 3. Profaning my holy name - BLASPHEMY. 4. Pledging by every altar, and drinking wine in the house of their god - IDOLATRY. 5. Giving Nazarites strong drink, and forbidding prophets to prophesy - REBELLION. They literally piled up sins on top of sins against God.

Amos 2:13 - "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves."

Amos Prophesied That Israel Would Have No Strength

Amos prophesied what would happen to Israel. Flight would perish from the swift. The strong could not strengthen himself. The mighty could not deliver himself. The archer could not stand. The runner could not flee. The horseman could not deliver himself. The courageous would flee away naked. These prophecies eventually led to the total ruin of Israel when Assyrians took them helplessly away from their homeland. Before you sin, remember: God can take your strength.

Amos 2:14 - "The flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself."

God Had To Punish His Favorite Family

Israel was the only family on earth that God had ever been intimate with. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." But they ceaselessly transgressed against Him, and sin always separates men from God. Amos delivered a divine warning. "Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel."

Amos 3:2,6 - "Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. ...Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?"

Can Two Walk Together, Except They Be Agreed?

Israel's sins made God's favorite family His hated enemy. Instead of comparing their relationship to a Father and His beloved children, the analogy depicted a lion roaring, and a fowler setting snares for his prey. Where did the love go? The people forsook their LORD.

Amos 3:3,9-10 - "Can two walk together, except they be agreed? ...Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof. For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces."

Why Does A Lion Roar?

They say that a lion is king of the jungle. Few things on earth strike terror like the roar of a lion. Lions roar to drive off competitors and to terrify their prey. So when God roars, it means that the King of heaven and earth is warning His enemies and His prey.

Amos 3:4,8 - "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? ...The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

Palaces

Many mighty rulers throughout history attempted to immortalize themselves by building great buildings - palaces, temples, mosques, and shrines - as magnificent, permanent testimonials to their earthly powers. But Amos prophesied that Almighty God would devour the palaces of His enemies. Even Jerusalem's palaces would be spoiled because of Israel's sins. Messiah will construct new palaces and a new temple when He comes.

Amos 3:11,15 - "Thy palaces shall be spoiled. ...And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD."

Led Away Like Cows - The Cows Of Bashan

Amos referred to backsliding Israel as "ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountains of Samaria." The tribe of Manasseh, one of the first tribes to apostatize, dwelled in the region of Bashan. "Kine" is a word for cows. For Israel's sins, God declared that enemies [Assyrians] would break down their walls and their fences, and they would be led away like lines of cows breaking through a fence, instead of through the gates, with dignity.

Amos 4:2 - "And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her."

Yet Have Ye Not Returned Unto Me

The prophet Amos, contemporary with Hosea, Isaiah and King Uzziah, saw Israel apostatize under King Jeroboam. Amos lived in Judah, but preached to the northern tribes. He listed so many punishments God had sent to them because of their sins, "yet have ye not returned unto me," the LORD said. Insolent people ignore God's chastisements to their own hurt.

Amos 4:6-10 - "I also have given you ...want of bread, ...withholden the rain, cities wandered ...to drink water, ...blasting and mildew, ...slain with the sword, ...taken away your horses, ...yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."

Prepare To Meet Thy God

Men and women in every generation have spurned their Creator. Although He deals with them forcefully in terrible works upon earth, they still ignore Him. Even when God moved drastically, as at Sodom and Gomorrah, men still refused to repent. This may be your final warning.

Amos 4:12-13 - "...Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name."

Seek Me, And Ye Shall Live

If more people would seek the LORD, the world would be a much better place. Why are we so enamored with celebrities, actors, athletes, entertainers, or rich and famous personalities, and NOT GOD? Why must we hear sermons in our pulpits about football coaches and basketball players? Seek the LORD!

Amos 5:4,6,8 - "Seek ye me, and ye shall live: ...Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; ...Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, ...that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name."

Hate Evil. Love Good.

Just about every prophet in the Bible toiled at exposing the sinfulness of sin. That is the work of true men of God. As sin multiplies rampantly, however, men of God are increasingly ignored. "Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time." Regardless of the times, however, God always favors those who hate evil and love good.

Amos 5:14-15 - "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good."

The Day Of The LORD Is Darkness, And Not Light

The prophets prophesied "the day of the LORD" numerous times in reference to coming judgments. Amos was first to warn Israel that Assyrians would capture them. They mistakenly believed that the Day of the LORD would be a day of blessing. Amos had bad news.

Amos 5:18-19 - "Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or ...leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him."

The Songs And Music Of Sinners

Oh, God detests just about everything sinners do. He really is angry at the wicked every day. But sinners have a way of entertaining themselves as a way of smothering their guilt and conscience. You can sing, and dance and play your music, while you defy God and His holiness, but all of your frivolous music is going to end one of these days.

Amos 5:23-24 - "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

Fiddling While Rome Burns

Legend says that Emperor Nero stood on his balcony and played the lyre as he watched the city of Rome burn in 64 AD. Hence the popular phrase, "fiddling while Rome burns." In the days of the prophet Amos, he cried, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, ...That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; ...but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." It is happening again today. Judgment is coming!

Amos 6:1,5 - "Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive."

Remember Calneh, Hamath and Gath

Calneh was a city built by Nimrod [also called Ctesiphon, on the river Tigris] that was captured by the Assyrians and eventually fell into ruins. Hamath was a great city that fell to the Assyrians in Amos' day. Gath was a city

taken by Hazael, king of Damascus shortly before Amos' day. Amos warned Israel that they would likewise fall into ruin unless they turned from their sins.

Amos 6:2 - "Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms?"

Self-Delusion Is Fatal

The prophet targeted the self-delusions of Israel: "ye put far away the evil day," (procrastination, denial and excuse-making), lying on ivory beds, stretching on couches, eating, drinking, making music and living in luxury (taking false comforts). Their prosperity and successes became an abomination to God. Beware the self-delusion of trusting in temporal comforts when divine judgments are certain to come. Every generation will answer to God.

Amos 6:8 - "The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, ...I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein."

Judgment Turned Into Gall, Righteousness Into Hemlock

In God's economy, intangible precepts are far more important and more valuable than tangible possessions or physical strength. Amos prophesied a death plague that would empty the houses of Israel for trusting in the "horns [of] our own strength." They despised righteous judgment. It was gall and hemlock (poison) to them. Our modern generation is exactly the same. Cursed.

Amos 6:12 - "...ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock: ...behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you."

No Grasshoppers, No Fire, But A Plumbline

The LORD showed Amos that grasshoppers would devour the fall crops of Israel, but Amos pleaded with God for mercy, and God called off the grasshoppers. Then God threatened judgment by fire, and Amos again repented in behalf of the people. Finally, the LORD showed him a plumbline. As a carpenter judges his work by a plumbline, God judged Israel by His straight measure - and rejected them.

Amos 7:8-9 - "I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: ...And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste."

What Makes A Prophet?

What makes a prophet? The word of the LORD turns a man into a seer. Supernaturally, he sees the will of God clearly, as other men cannot. He overflows with divine understanding that he cannot contain. He must declare what he sees. King Amaziah tried to silence Amos, but he could not.

Amos 7:12-17 - "Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away ...prophesy not again any more, ...[Amos said] Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, ...Therefore thus saith the LORD; ...thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided."

A Basket Of Summer Fruit

God showed Amos a basket of summer fruit, and said, "The end is come upon my people of Israel." Apparently, the basket of fruit depicted the last harvest of the season. God expected no more good out of Israel. Surely enough, the northern ten tribes NEVER had another righteous king. They are now called the "lost tribes of Israel."

Amos 8:2 - "And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more."

Sinners Want To Get Out Of Church Early

The people lived like they did not have time for God. "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" They wanted Sabbath to pass so they could get back to their cheating, thieving and taking advantage of others. If you are stingy with God, He will become stingy with you.

Amos 8:9-10 - "I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day: And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation."

God Promised A Famine Of His Word Upon Israel

Amos pronounced some of the first doomsday prophecies against Israel, including the ruin of the temple, and dead bodies throughout Jerusalem. "I will never forget any of their works," the LORD said. If you refuse to hear God's word, He may stop speaking to you.

Amos 8:11-12 - "The days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: ...they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it."

The Sword Of The LORD

In a vision, Amos saw the Lord standing on the altar in the temple, commanding the door posts to shake, and that His sword should pursue those who had committed all the aforementioned evils against Him. He swore that they could not escape His sword, though they sought refuge in heaven or hell, in the mountains or in the seas, even captive among their enemies.

Amos 9:4 - "Though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good."

Sifting Divides Nations

God often punishes people by dispersing them. God divided their tongues at Babel. They dispersed, and their little empire collapsed. God divides people physically and geographically to diffuse their evildoing. Sinful Israel became "as Ethiopians to me," [like people outside His covenant], so God decided they must either die, or be scattered like corn from a sieve.

Amos 9:9-10 - "I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, ...All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us."

I Will Raise Up The Tabernacle Of David That Is Fallen

Amos remembered how King David inspired the people to worship. The tabernacle [tent] that David pitched for the Ark of the Covenant was inaugurated with the joyous music of harps, psalteries, timbrels, cornets, trumpets, cymbals and choirs of singers. Amos prophesied that God would punish Israel, and afterward, He would raise up the tabernacle of David again. James said that the church born at Pentecost fulfilled that prophecy (see Acts 15:16).

Amos 9:11 - "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, ...and I will build it as in the days of old."

The Remnant Of Edom And Of All The Heathen

Here is a prophetic treasure completely overlooked by most commentators. Since James, in Acts 15:16, said the New Testament church is the restored tabernacle of David, then the next prophecy pertains to the church: "...that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name." The church, called by the name of Jesus, will rule the heathen during the millennial kingdom of Christ.

Amos 9:12 - "That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this."

Bumper Crops In The Millennium

As soon as Jesus Christ establishes His earthly Kingdom at Jerusalem, after destroying all His enemies at Armageddon, Israel will begin flourishing like the Garden of Eden.

Amos 9:13-15 - "The plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, ...they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD."

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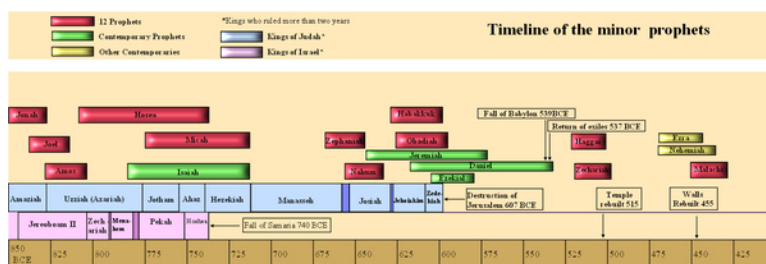
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