

Haven't Heard the Gospel? Danger!
Amos 1:2–10

January 15, 2006

SERMON NOTES

A. Introduction

1. what Amos' time was like ...
2. what Amos was like ...

B. Scripture Reading Amos 1:2-10

C. Highlights

1. Who is speaking?
 - a. So?
2. "For three transgressions ... and for four" ... implies? (Jam 2:10)
3. "I will not turn back *my wrath*" ... means?

D. As Historical Prophecy

1. Syria, Phoenicia, Philistia are all ... (consider Eph 2:12)
2. Syria (Aram), represented by its capital, Damascus Amos 1:3-5
 - a. its transgression was ... (compare 2 Kings 8:12)
 - b. its punishment would be ...
 - c. its fulfilment was ... (check 2 Kings 16:9)

3. Philistia, and its principal cities (Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron)
 - a. its transgression was ... (2 Chr 21:16-17) [Amos 1:6-8]
 - b. its punishment would be ...
 - c. its fulfilment was ... (compare Zeph 2:4-6)
4. Phoenicia and its principal city, Tyre Amos 1:9–10
 - a. its transgression was ...
 - b. its punishment would be ...
 - c. its fulfilment was ... (compare Ezek 26:7–11)

E. As Ongoing Prophetic Truth

1. the transgression of all these nations was to ...
2. from which we learn that God will .. (Rom 12:19, Rev 6:9–11)

F. As a Present Application & Conclusion

1. we can take personal comfort that
2. but, uncomfortably, it should make us realize (John 3:36)

–{1}. **Amos 1:2–9 Haven't Heard the Gospel? Danger!**

A. Introduction

1. last week we looked at Amos, after whom this book is named
 - a. we looked at his times
 - (A) what had happened that had brought Israel – the 10 northern tribes – to their then current, sinful state
 - (B) at how Jeroboam, their first king, had erected two golden calves, one in Bethel, one in Dan, so that his people would not go and worship in Jerusalem
 - (C) at how that, for two centuries, these, both rulers and people, had pursued false gods
 - b. we looked at his person
 - (A) that he was but a shepherder; a poor farmer
 - (B) yet God had called him from his small village in the southern kingdom, Judah
 - (C) to prophesy to the northern kingdom, to its people and to its king and rulers
 - (D) and this he did with courage and clarity
2. we looked particularly at the seven nations surrounding Israel
 - a. there was Judah, immediately to the south, and a sister nation, both having originated as the children of Israel
 - b. there were Edom, Moab and Ammon, closely related nations having descended from Esau and Lot
 - c. and there were Phoenicia, Philistia and Syria; neighbours but with no kinship relation in their past
 - d. and it is these last three nations that we will be looking at further today; let's see what Amos has to say about them in our ...

A. Scripture Reading:

Amos 1:2–10 (NAS):

1. ² And he said, "The LORD roars from Zion, And from Jerusalem He utters His voice; And the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn, And the summit of Carmel dries up."
 - a. we shall come back to this theme – the LORD roaring – in a few weeks but we will leave it for the moment

2. The prophecy against Syria: ³ Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they threshed Gilead with *implements* of sharp iron. ⁴ So I will send fire upon the house of Hazael, And it will consume the citadels of Ben-hadad. ⁵ I will also break the *gate* bar of Damascus, And cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, And him who holds the scepter, from Beth-eden; So the people of Aram will go exiled to Kir," Says the LORD.
3. The prophecy against Philistia: ⁶ Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Gaza and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they deported an entire population To deliver *it* up to Edom. ⁷ So I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza, And it will consume her citadels. ⁸ I will also cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, And him who holds the scepter, from Ashkelon; I will even unleash My power upon Ekron, And the remnant of the Philistines will perish," Says the Lord GOD. (Sovereign LORD)
4. The prophecy against Phoenicia: ⁹ Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Tyre and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they delivered up an entire population to Edom And did not remember *the* covenant of brotherhood. ¹⁰ So I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre, And it will consume her citadels."
5. This morning I will attempt to look at these words from three perspectives, from three different applications with each one of them building upon the prior:
 - a. first, as historical prophecy
 - b. next, as ongoing prophetic truth
 - c. finally, as a present application
6. but before we do so, there are some highlights in these verses which are worthy of comment and which will help us to understand the message God is sending through Amos

B. Highlights

1. who is speaking?

- a. Professor C. E. M. Joad was a renowned intellectual of the 20th century. He was often called on for wise comments; and on one occasion in the evening as he sat down at college high table he was asked by a very prim and proper lady: "Professor, what do you think about Gawd?" "Madam," he replied (a wise answer is coming!), "I should think it was slightly more important what Gawd thinks about us."^{2}.
- b. it is God who is speaking in these verses
 - (A) it is God who is saying what He thinks about these seven nations surrounding the Northern kingdom
 - (B) we find the phrase, "Thus says the LORD" preceding the prophecies against each of these nations, and,
 - (C) just to emphasize this point, in this book and in these first chapters, Amos closes many of these prophecies with a phrase such as "says the LORD"
 - (D) so, make no mistake about it, says Amos, this is God who is speaking and you had better pay attention!

2. next, the repetition of the phrase "For three transgressions of {this or that place} and for four" for each of the nations

- a. this is a formula or idiomatic turn of speech
- b. if you count, you will not find 3 or 4 items listed
- c. and even if you were to find exactly that number
- d. the implication is still the same: God is saying, there are a huge number of transgressions, but I am telling you only of a few, for these few are sufficient by themselves to justify my judgement which I am pronouncing upon you
- e. a generic truth adequately stated by James 2:10 (NAS): For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.
- f. God has no shortage of complaints against these nations

3. and for each of the nations, the statement, *"I will not turn back my wrath"* or *"I will not revoke its punishment"*
 - a. what God is saying, the judgements He is announcing, are certain and sure
 - b. often in this book, Amos calls God by a name which is possibly best translated as *"the Sovereign LORD"* (NIV)
 - (A) these are not just casual statements of God
 - (B) but the Lord GOD, the Sovereign over all the nations; the One who is capable of dealing with these matters, is speaking, and He will carry them out

4. to summarize
 - a. it is God, not man, making these judgments
 - b. God has no shortage of complaints against these nations
 - c. God's judgement is sure and certain
 - d. ... so let us look at

C. As Historical Prophecy

1. this first group of nations – Syria, Phoenicia, Philistia – are all pagan, heathen nations
 - a. there is no pretence of following Jehovah among them
 - b. there is no history of their having been His worshippers
 - c. they have no relation to Abraham or his descendants
 - d. they are, as we have been before Christ saved us, in the words of Paul in Ephesians 2:12 (NAS): *"excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."*
 - e. so this message was very acceptable to Amos' audience of the Northern Tribes: one can almost hear the false priest at Bethel saying "Amen" to each judgement; the King echoing a "Hallelujah" as Syria, Phoenicia, Philistia are singled out in turn for judgement
 - f. Amos has got their attention!

2. Consider Syria (Aram) as represented by its capital, Damascus
 - a. its transgression: the atrocities of war committed against Gilead, that portion of Israel in the Trans-Jordan – either in picture or in fact like the use of iron-toothed threshing instruments dragged over the harvest to pulverized the stalks and free the grain, so had their actions been
 - (A) when God sent Elisha to anoint Hazael as king over Syria, Elisha wept, as he expresses it in 2 Kings 8:12 (NAS): *“Because I know the evil that you will do to the sons of Israel: their strongholds you will set on fire, and their young men you will kill with the sword, and their little ones ...”* describing atrocities I won’t repeat here
 - (B) Hazael, king of Syria, did all these things and worse
 - b. its punishment: God directed their punishment
 - (A) to the rulers; to the palaces of Ben-hadad and his son Hazael; and to the people who followed them
 - (B) the names used in these verses may be symbolic
 - (1) the Valley of Aven (or “nothingness” a synonym for idols) – God would destroy they idolatry
 - (2) Beth Eden (or “house of pleasure”) – God would destroy their comfortable way of living
 - (C) and the people would be exiled back to Kir which is where they had originally come (Amos 9:7)
 - c. What happened? Did God fulfill this prophecy? Read 2 Kings 16:9 (NAS): *So the king of Assyria listened to him; and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and captured it, and carried the people of it away into exile to Kir, and put Rezin to death.* – Rezin was the successor king
3. Consider Philistia and its principal cities
 - a. its transgression: 2 Chronicles 21:16–17 (NAS) describes this: *“Then the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and the Arabs who bordered the Ethiopians; and they came against Judah and invaded it, and carried away all the possessions found in the king’s house together with his sons and his wives, so that no son was left to him except Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.”*
 - (A) God used them to punish wicked King Jehoram
 - (B) but, as Joel 3:5–6 tells us, they plundered the temple and sold the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah as captives to, among others, the Greeks

- b. its punishment: the principal cities of Philistia – Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron – would be destroyed, and the nation would perish as a people
- c. What happened? The prophet Zephaniah was far more explicit in his words; let's see how they were fulfilled

- (A) Zeph 2:4 (NAS): "For Gaza will be abandoned, And Ashkelon a desolation; Ashdod will be driven out at noon, And Ekron will be uprooted." – the site of Ekron (Akkaron) is now called Akir, but no mounds mark this ancient city; it is now ploughed fields; rooted up ^{–{3}}.
- (B) Zeph 2:5–6 (NAS): "Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, The nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; And I will destroy you, So that there will be no inhabitant. So the seacoast will be pastures, *With* caves for shepherds and folds for flocks." – Volney in 1785 describes "villages badly built of dried mud ... all the rest of the country is desert ... abandoned to ... flocks" ^{–{4}}.

4. Consider Phoenicia and its principal city, Tyre

- a. its transgression: in that same incident in which Philistia took captives of Judah–Jerusalem and sold them, Tyre made merchandise of those captives as middlemen, selling them to Edom as slaves
 - (A) they were not involved in the actual conquest
 - (B) oh no! these were long-standing friends of Judah and Jerusalem, with ties dating back to David & Solomon
 - (C) no King of Judah/Israel had ever warred against Tyre
 - (D) but with friends like these, who needs enemies?
- b. its punishment: direct punishment of its rulers by the destruction of their defences and their habitation
- c. What happened? Well this is only the first stage of the punishment that was meted out to Tyre, but there is a graphic prophetic description of what happened in Ezekiel 26:7–11, of how Nebuchadnezzar came, cast up engines of war against the walls of Tyre breaking them down, invading their pleasant houses – the palaces – and taking plunder of their merchandise and riches.

5. God said he would punish these nations; the record is He did

D. As Ongoing Prophetic Truth

1. did you note the common thread of the transgressions of these three nations; in what wrong they were united?
 - a. in different ways, either directly or indirectly
 - b. they participated in oppression against Judah or Israel

2. and there is likewise a common theme in God's judgement against them; God will revenge His people of being wronged
 - a. God may use pagan, heathen people to chastise His own, but that does not make these nations guiltless
 - b. effecting justice on behalf of the oppressed and executing judgement against the oppressors are balancing and equal aspects of God's judicial activity

3. and there is an aspect of God's nature which applies equally to the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament people of God, as Paul declares to the church in Romans 12:19 (NAS): "[Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord.](#)"
 - a. there is no wrong that is done to you, as a believer, that God has not noted and will make it right in His time
 - b. as we read as the fifth seal is opened in Revelation 6:9-11 (NAS): ⁹ ... [I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;](#) ¹⁰ [and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"](#) ¹¹ [And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also.](#)
 - c. and in Revelation 20 we find that all these are vindicated

E. As a Present Application

1. what is the purpose of our looking at this prophecy today
 - a. so that we can go comfortably home and rejoice in the fact that we are Christians – well, we are to take joy in our salvation but that isn't it all
 - b. so we can take satisfaction that God will revenge us for every time that we suffer some wrong
 - c. no; it is so that we can begin to have a glimpse of the truth of the fact that those who have never heard the gospel, those who are pagans and heathen, whether they live 20,000 kilometres away or next door; are facing a certain and sure punishment from God unless they repent and turn to Jesus Christ as their Saviour

2. I would like to be able to think that all people will be saved, that God is so loving that He will never condemn anybody
 - a. it would make things a lot easier, much more comfortable
 - b. gone would be the necessity to witness to the unsaved
 - c. gone would be the need for having to evangelize
 - d. but there is one problem with this: it just isn't true!
 - e. what God has said, He will do: do you recall what we said about those words "*I will not turn back my wrath*"? ... God has spoken and he will carry it out:
 - f. the Bible says in John 3:36 (NAS): *He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*

F. Conclusion

1. mankind is in a terrible state and we need to see that and to understand its implications and be driven, weeping, to pray for and to reach out to those all around us who are dying without Christ and without hope in this present world

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. From “The Last Straw” by Rev. Simon Scott, The Round Church of St. Andrew, Cambridge, England – Kerux sermon #20442
3. The Wonders of Prophecy, John Urquhart, Gospel Publishing House, ca., 1910; page 108
4. The Wonders of Prophecy, John Urquhart, Gospel Publishing House, ca. 1910; page 106