

AMOS

II Penitence Promoted, Chapters 3-6

- A. Reason should call for repentance, 3:1—4:11
 - 1. The Lord does not roar vengeance without a cause, 3:1-8
 - 2. Their sins astonish even the heathen, 3:9-15
 - 3. The holiness of the Lord demands punishment for evil, 4:1-5
 - 4. Their past chastenings should make them think, 4:6-11
- B. Revelation should call for repentance, 4:12—5:13
 - 1. God has revealed His character and will, 4:12-13
 - 2. Hear God's word against you, 5:1-5
 - 3. The omnipotence and omniscience of God, 5:6-13
- C. Righteousness demands repentance, 5:14—6:14
 - 1. Hate evil and love good, 5:14-20
 - 2. Rid your religion of its hypocrisy, 5:21-27
 - 3. Luxury and ease leads to indolence, 5:1-8
 - 4. False pride turns righteousness to bitterness, 6:9-14

III Prophecies Presented, Chapters 7-9

- A. Causes of Judgment Prophesied, 7:1—8:6
 - 1. Out of line with God's standard (the plumbline) 7:1-9
 - 2. Corrupt Religious Leaders (Amaziah) 7:10-17
 - 3. God's Longsuffering Has Expired (basket of summer fruit) 8:1-6
- B. Description of Judgments Prophesied, 8:7—9:10
 - 1. A time of bitter mourning, 8:7-10
 - 2. A time of spiritual famine, 8:11-14
 - 3. Thorough and Inescapable 9:1-6
 - 4. A time of disruption and dispersion, 9:7-10
- C. Results of Judgment Prophesied, 9:11-15
 - 1. David's throne and dominion restored, 9:11-12
 - 2. Fruitfulness and prosperity restored, 9:13-14
 - 3. Security, peace and protection restored, 9:15

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—DAMASCUS

TEXT: 1:1-5

1. The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

2. And he said, Jehovah will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the pastures of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.
3. Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Damascus, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:
4. but I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the palaces of Benhadad.
5. And I will break the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden; and the people of Syria shall go into captivity into Kir, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Why would God send a man from Judah to prophesy to Israel?
- b. How does Jehovah "roar" from Zion?
- c. Where is Kir?

PARAPHRASE

These are words of Amos who was a herdsman living in the village of Tekoa. One day, in a vision, God told him some of the things which were going to happen to the northern kingdom, Israel. This vision came to him at the time Uzziah was king of Judah, and while Jeroboam, (son of Joash), was king of Israel—two years before the great earthquake. Amos said, The Lord, like a ferocious lion, roars His warning from His dwelling place in Jerusalem, the city of Zion. The lush pastures wither from the top of Mount Carmel to the plains.

This the Lord's word: Because of sin after sin committed by Damascus I will not leave her unpunished. Because these Syrians crushed the prisoners of my people to death with iron threshing machines of war I will punish them. I will burn down the palaces of Hazael and Benhadad. I will tear down the defenses of the capital city Damascus and slaughter the inhabitants of Syria's major cities, even the potentates of these cities will I slaughter. Those who are left of Syria I will send into captivity into the land of Elam.

SUMMARY

The Lord roars His warnings like a lion from its lair. He begins with Damascus, or Syria. The heathen are responsible to God for their injustices and immoralities.

COMMENT

v. 1. THE WORDS OF AMOS . . . OF TEKOA . . . CONCERNING ISRAEL . . . We do not know exactly why God chose a man of the southern kingdom, Judah, to send with His message to the northern kingdom, Israel. The fact that God's presence remained in the Temple which was in Jerusalem, the southern kingdom, may have had something to do with it. However, Hosea, a younger contemporary of Amos, prophet to Israel, was from Israel. All we need to know is that God selected the right man at the right time to do the right job. We have already discussed the date of Amos' prophecy and his place of birth in the Introduction of this book. It should be remembered that he preached his messages of denunciation and doom in an atmosphere of unprecedented material prosperity which was being accompanied by a widespread decay of moral values and a wicked oppression of the poor. Disaster seemed most unlikely. Amos and his message were extremely unpopular. Yet within a very few years four kings of Israel had been assassinated, then Hoshea was deposed and imprisoned and Israel ceased to be a nation in 722-721 B.C. at the Assyrian captivity. Though he was a shepherd, Amos is the author of the purest and most classical Hebrew in the entire Old Testament. His style is grave, measured, and rhetorical—Amos was an orator. He uses brief, uninvolved sentences. His vocabulary and style are conspicuously those of Semetic homeliness, especially of a man of the wilderness.

v. 2 JEHOVAH WILL ROAR FROM ZION . . . PASTURES SHALL MOURN . . . AND THE TOP OF CARMEL . . . WITHER . . . How often Amos had probably heard the wild lion of the mountainous regions around Tekoa roar its warning from its lair. The Hebrew people were very familiar with lions and many books in the Bible mention them. The Lord Jesus Christ is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. A number of instances are mentioned where a man of Palestine killed a lion in a single-handed encounter (Judg. 14:5-8; I Sam. 17:36-37). See our comments on Joel 3:16 also. Zion is *tsiyon* in Hebrew and probably means *citadel*. It is the name of one of the hills or mountains on which Jerusalem stood. It is first mentioned in the O.T. as a Jebusite fortress (II Sam. 5:6-9), but David captured it and called it the city of David. It is used figuratively for the covenant people of God both of O.T. times and N.T. times (cf. Isa. 33:14; 34:8; 49:14, etc. for O.T. covenant people; cf. Heb. 12:22 for N.T. usage which also indicates some O.T. usage of Zion was prophetic of the N.T. church). In this case Zion means the city of God, Jerusalem (as evidenced by the parallelism

here), where God's presence dwells. It would be a subtle reminder to the northern kingdom that God was to be worshiped only at Jerusalem! (cf. Ex. 25:21-22; 29:42-43; 40:33-38; Num. 7:89; Lev. 1:1; I Kings 8:10-11).

Amos reveals that the Sovereign God will bring His judgment upon Israel first through a drought. God will wither the pasture land from the top of forest-crowned Mt. Carmel, the mountain at the mouth of the Kishon river, to the verdant plains of the lowlands. The shepherd's heart of Amos could picture no greater display of God's judgment than the burning and withering of the fresh green pasture lands so urgently necessary to the life of this farming, shepherding people. *Carmel* means "garden." Mt. Carmel was an especially verdant place for grazing sheep. Its perennial springs outlasted even the three years and six months of drought in Elijah's days (cf. I Kings 17 & 18). If this pasture-land should wither it would be manifestly at the command of God. Practically every prophet reveals Jehovah God as the Sovereign of nature—the Creator, Sustainer and User of Nature. He sustains nature under certain laws inviolable only until He deems it necessary to manipulate or contravene them to serve His omnipotent and omniscient purposes.

v. 3 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF DAMASCUS . . . FOR FOUR . . . I WILL NOT TURN AWAY THE PUNISHMENT . . . THEY HAVE THRESHED GILEAD WITH THRESHING INSTRUMENTS OF IRON . . . K & D say, ". . . the numbers merely serve to denote the multiplicity of the sins, the exact number of which has no bearing upon the matter." It is a Hebrew idiom expressing fulness. J. B. Phillips, in *Four Prophets*, translates it, "Because of outrage after outrage committed by Damascus . . ." The Syrians have filled their cup of wickedness full to overflowing. God will not relent! He is going to punish them. Their one greatest sin has been to cruelly crush the Gileadites (a territory east of the Jordan allocated to Reuben, Gad and Manasseh) with iron threshing carts. Hazael the Syrian king did this when he conquered that territory during the reign of Jehu (II Kings 10:32-33; 13:7; cf. also II Sam. 12:31). The threshing cart was a sort of a cart with toothed iron wheels underneath, which was driven about to crush the straw in the threshing-floors after the grain had been beaten out. They have despoiled God's possession—they have violated, and that in the cruelest fashion, the most basic law of God—the sanctity of human life. But even worse, they have done despite to the covenant people of God (cf. our comments on Obadiah). To attack God's people is to attack God!

v. 4-5 . . . I WILL SEND A FIRE INTO THE HOUSE OF HAZAEL . . . BREAK THE BAR OF DAMASCUS . . . AND THE PEOPLE OF SYRIA SHALL

GO INTO CAPTIVITY INTO KIR . . . Hazael was the murderer of Benhadad I, to whom the prophet Elisha foretold that he would reign over Syria, and predicted the cruelties that he would practice towards Israel (II Kings 8:7ff). An inscription of Shalmaneser III states that Benhadad perished and "Hazael, a son of nobody, (meaning not of royal lineage), seized the throne." Shalmaneser III also records two attacks on Hazael in which he claims great victories for Assyria with severe damage to the Syrian countryside. Hazael reigned for at least 43 years and perhaps longer, and he oppressed Israel all the days of his reign. In 732 Tiglathpileser III subdued the city of Damascus and brought an end to the Aramaean state.

To break the bar of Damascus would mean to "break the bolt of the gate." Literally, to destroy the city's defenses and overcome it. To "cut off the inhabitant" is to slaughter him. Those who were not slaughtered, God would cause to be taken into captivity to Kir. Kir (cf. Isa. 22:6) the territory in ancient Elam east of the Persian Gulf, on the banks of the river *Kur*, from which, according to Amos 9:7, the Syrians originally emigrated. Many of the Syrians were taken captive in Tiglathpileser's conquest in 732 B.C.

Jehovah God, all-sovereign Creator of the universe, orders the migrations and national boundaries of the nations (Acts. 17:26), and cares for their welfare (Acts 14:15-18). He brought up the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir (Amos 9:7). He has the right and the power to punish them for their sins. And what are the sins of which they are guilty? As we have mentioned before, they are guilty of desecrating God's holy people. But in the main their sin is simply *inhumanity*. They have broken those most basic laws of God written on the heart and conscience of all mankind by which the relation of man to man and nation to nation ought to be governed. They are capable of exercising moral judgments. Therefore the violation of the natural laws of humanity written on their consciences demands punishment.

QUIZ

1. Why was Amos' message so unpopular in his day?
2. What is the figure of God "roaring" referring to?
3. Why be so specific that God's warning would come from Zion?
4. How does God use nature to serve His purposes?
5. How did the Syrians thresh the people of Gilead?
6. Who was Hazael and when did he live and what kind of a person was he?
7. What do we learn from God's message to the heathen here?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—GAZA AND TYRE

TEXT: 1:6-10

- 6 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Gaza, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole people, to deliver them up to Edom:
- 7 but I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.
- 8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon; and I will turn my hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord Jehovah.
- 9 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions, of Tyre, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they delivered up the whole people to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:
- 10 but I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

QUERIES

- a. Where are Gaza, Ashdod and Ekron, and for what does God hold them responsible?
- b. Where is Tyre?
- c. What is the "brotherly covenant?"

PARAPHRASE

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Gaza, I will not leave her unpunished. Because these Philistines captured whole cities and areas of My holy land and people and sold every last one of them into slavery to the Edomites I will consume them in the fires of judgment. I will slaughter the inhabitants of the major cities of Philistia even the potentates of these cities I will slaughter. The very last people of the Philistine race I will cause to perish.

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Tyre, I will not leave her unpunished. Because of their slave-trade with Edom and because they forgot the peaceful alliances and behavior of My covenant people toward them, I will consume the cities and peoples of Phoenicia in the fires of judgment.

SUMMARY

Philistia and Phoenicia are "roared" at by the Lord. They have captured whole cities of the covenant people and sold them into slavery.

COMMENT

v. 6 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF GAZA . . . BECAUSE THEY CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE THE WHOLE PEOPLE . . . By mentioning most of the principal cities of Philistia, Amos means to include the whole nation under the judgment of God. The book of Judges mentions the Philistines as a major contender against the Hebrews for the possession of Palestine. When David united all Israel under his rule, he decisively defeated the Philistines in two major battles (II Sam. 5:17-25) and from this time on, the Philistine grip was broken until after the death of Solomon. Then at the division of the kingdom the Philistines reasserted the independence they had lost to David and captured whole cities selling the people into slavery. Sargon (722-705 B.C.) captured the Philistine cities, deported some of the inhabitants and set over them an Assyrian governor. The later struggles between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids (Egypt and Syria), prophesied by Daniel 11, caused great suffering and devastation to the Philistine cities. This practically closes their history as strictly Philistinian. They continued in N.T. times as non-Jewish centers, becoming Hellenistic cities.

Amos has in mind such carrying away of captives as occurred in II Chron. 21:16 (cf. Joel 3:3-4). These Philistines captured whole cities and areas of Hebrew people and sold them to Edomites and to the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians probably sold them, in turn, to the Greeks (cf. Joel 3:6).

v. 7 . . . I WILL SEND A FIRE ON THE WALL OF GAZA . . . It could be that Amos meant literal fire would destroy these heathen cities since the destructive forces of fire have always been a major result of warfare in every age. But it most probably is a figure of the judgment of God. (cf. Matt. 3:12; John 15:6, etc.).

v. 8 . . . I WILL CUT OFF THE INHABITANT FROM ASHDOD . . . ASHKELON . . . EKRON . . . AND THE REMNANT OF THE PHILISTINES SHALL PERISH . . . Three more of the principal cities of Philistia are here mentioned, only Gath is left out, and this not because it was not to be judged. It is clear that God means the Philistines as a nation or race shall perish. And so it is true today, Philistia is no longer a nation and the Philistines are no longer a people. All of these cities were located in the plain of Philistia, a part of which is now known as the Gaza

Strip. Egypt and the Jews are still fighting over this territory. Its former glory and power has long since melted into the dust of antiquity . . . but the Word of God stands as firmly as ever today!

v. 9-10 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF TYRE . . . BECAUSE THEY DELIVERED UP THE WHOLE PEOPLE TO EDOM, AND REMEMBERED NOT THE BROTHERLY COVENANT . . . Tyre was the capital of Phoenicia. It was north of Mt. Carmel and south of Sidon. The people were seafaring people. Tyre was one of the principal seaports of that entire territory bounded by the Mediterranean coast. They imported and exported many different things among which were slaves—men, women and children often Hebrew captives of raids by the Philistines, and the Syrians. David and Solomon had entered into a friendly alliance with the king of Tyre (II Sam. 5:11; I Kings 5:15ff) but the people of Tyre of Amos' generation had forgotten that. Furthermore they were not mindful of the fact that no king of Israel or Judah had ever made war on Phoenicia. Their indifference and cruelty to the covenant people of God through their slave-trading was wholly unjustifiable and God announces that He will visit them with His judgment.

In 322 B.C. in the course of his conquest of the East, Alexander the Great appeared before Tyre. The island stronghold (where the people of the old city of Tyre had fled at the siege of Nebuchadnezzar almost 300 years earlier) closed her gates, and Alexander was forced to build a causeway, and after long months of frustration and vast penetration, take the city by costly storming. Alexander built the causeway out of the timbers and stones of the old city of Tyre by scraping its site "flat like the top of a rock." Tyre was broken, and the causeway still remains, a place, as Ezekiel foretold, on which fishermen might dry their nets (cf. Ezek. 26:5-14; 47:10; cf. also Isa. 23; Zech. 9). Tyre made a measure of political recovery and for a period functioned as a republic. She struck an early treaty with Rome, and her independence was respected until 20 B.C. when Augustus withdrew it. The remaining history of Tyre is without significance. The ancient city of Tyre on the mainland has never been rebuilt!

QUIZ

1. Tell of the history of Philistia. What of the people of Philistia today?
2. What does Amos mean by speaking of "fire" upon each of these cities?
3. Tell of the history of Tyre. What of the people of Tyre today?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—EDOM AND MOAB

TEXT: 1:11-15

- 11 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Edom, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:
- 12 but I will send a fire upon Teman, and it shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.
- 13 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the woman with child of Gilead, that they may enlarge their border:
- 14 but I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind;
- 15 and their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Who was the Edomite's brother whom he pursued with the sword?
- b. Did the Ammonites actually butcher pregnant women?
- c. Did the king of Ammon go away into captivity?

PARAPHRASE

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Edom, I will not leave him unpunished. Because these Edomites have chased their brethren, the Israelites, with the sword to make them prisoners and slaves and because these Edomites were pitiless, relentless in their anger and continually full of wrath, I will consume the whole nation, from Teman in the north to Bozrah in the south, in the fires of My judgment.

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Ammon, I will not leave him unpunished. In their wars to extend the borders of their country these Ammonites committed cruel crimes, ripping open pregnant women with their swords. Because they have done these things I will consume them with the fire of My judgment and they shall go down with shouting and the battle will roar like a whirlwind in a mighty storm. Their king and princes will be taken captive into exile together, says the Lord.

SUMMARY

Edom and Ammon were related by blood to Israel yet they committed some of the most inhumane cruelties toward Israel. For these the Lord promises punishment.

COMMENT

v. 11-12. . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF EDMOM . . . HE DID PURSUE HIS BROTHER WITH THE SWORD . . . CAST OFF ALL PITY . . . HIS ANGER DID TEAR PERPETUALLY . . . I WILL SEND A FIRE UPON TEMAN . . . The Edomites were descendants of Esau, brother of Jacob (Israel). Edom became the relentless enemy of Israel constantly cultivating an implacable, mortal hatred towards the Israelites, which broke out into acts of cruelty at every possible opportunity. The Edomites were always busy raiding the cities and villages of Palestine, taking captives and using or selling them for slaves. God pronounces His judgment upon Teman and Bozrah which represent the extreme north and south, respectively, of the nation of Edom. Thus God says He will judge the whole nation. Be sure to refer to our comments on the book of Obadiah for Edom's relation to Israel.

v. 13-15 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF THE CHILDREN OF AMMON . . . THEY HAVE RIPPED UP WOMEN WITH CHILD OF GILEAD, THAT THEY MAY ENLARGE THEIR BORDER . . . BUT I WILL KINDLE A FIRE IN THE WALL OF RABBAH . . . AND THEIR KING SHALL GO INTO CAPTIVITY . . . The Ammonites (descendants of Ben-ammi) were related to the Moabites and Israelites through Lot (cf. Gen. 19:38). The Israelites were told by the Lord not to enter into battle with them as they journeyed toward the land of Promise (Deut. 2:19). Their nation was supposed to be just east of Moab stretching to the north as far as the Jabbok River and on the south to the hills of Edom but the Ammonites were continually trying to extend the borders of their land. They were a fierce people by nature, rebellious against Israel and idolatrous in their religious practices. They thrust out the right eye of all in Jabesh Gilead (1 Sam. 11:2). They were given to cruel atrocities (Jer. 40:14; 41:5-7; Amos 1:14). Though related to Israel, they refused to help them when asked (Deut. 23:4) and they joined with Moab in securing Balaam to curse them (Deut. 23:3-4). Later on in Israel's history they united with Sanballat to oppose the work of Nehemiah in restoring the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:10-19). The chief god of the fierce Ammon was Milchom, the principle of destruction, who was

appeared with sacrifices of living children, given to the fire to devour, (I Kings 11:7). Because of their sins and especially because they constantly opposed Israel, Ezekiel predicted their complete destruction (Ezek. 25:1-7). Their last stand seems to have been against Judas Maccabeus (I Macc. 5:6).

The occasion on which the Ammonites were guilty of ripping up pregnant women is not recorded in the O.T. They probably joined with Hazael (of whom it is also prophesied by Elisha, II Kings 8:12) when that Syrian king was at war with Israel. The Ammonites then would have availed themselves of the opportunity to widen their territory by conquering back the land which had been taken from them by Sihon, king of the Amorites, and was in turn taken possession of by the Israelites.

Greedy, heartless, inhuman rulers and peoples have committed the same (and often times worse) atrocities for the same aggrandizing purposes. And the same God who held the Ammonites accountable for their cruelties holds such nations today accountable with the same omniscient justice and holiness and power! Especially does God find it necessary to condemn those who make war on His saints!

QUIZ

1. Who were the Edomites and why did God hold them under condemnation?
2. Who were the Ammonites and why did God hold them under condemnation?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—MOAB

TEXT: 2:1-3

- 1 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Moab, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:
- 2 but I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth; and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet;
- 3 and I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith Jehovah.