

INJUSTICE IS INTOLERABLE / Sunday, June 7, 2015

Unifying Topic: **JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL AND JUDAH**

Lesson Text

I. Judah's Transgressions (Amos 2:4-5)

II. Israel's Transgressions (Amos 2:6-8)

The Main Thought: Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked: (Amos 2:4, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Even though they know right from wrong, some people treat others unjustly. What can unjust people expect will be the result of their misdeeds? God will not overlook injustice but will punish the unjust.

Lesson Aim: To understand God's judgment of Judah and Israel and to show the importance of seeking to do the just and honorable thing.

Life Aim: To address issues of injustice in our local communities and to encourage sensitivity towards social justice.

HISTORY:

The book of Amos opens with this humble herdsman watching his sheep. God then gives him a vision of what was about to happen to the nation of Israel. God condemns all the nations who have sinned against him and harmed His people. The prophecy is Amos' great burden from Jehovah began with Damascus, Syria, Gaza, and Tyre—raw heathens, then progressing to Edom, Ammon, and Moab—partly heathen, yet blood relatives. Then God proceeds to Judah—the hated brother of the south, and finally to Israel—His target.

This Book of Amos is very relevant to our day and time. Amos, whose name means, "*Burden or Burden Bearer*" is called by God to leave his hometown of Tekoa, about 10 or so miles south of Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom of Judah to preach and give a message of warning to the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the City of Bethel. Before becoming a prophet, Amos was a sheep herder and a sycamore fig farmer. He didn't come from a family of prophets. Now, Israel was divided into two parts: the Northern section comprised of 10 tribes and the Southern section comprised of 2 tribes. After Solomon's reign, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin became the Southern Kingdom (Judah) under Solomon's son Rehoboam. The other ten tribes became the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and followed Jeroboam who had rebelled against Rehoboam. Both kings did evil in the sight of the Lord (Read 1 Kings 12-14). Amos speaks with brutal frankness in denouncing sin; breaking God's laws. Both Judah and Israel are subject to the same kind of treatment.

Chapter 2:1-3 Moab was Ammon's neighbor to the south. Moab and Ammon were both descended from Lot through his daughters. However, the crime of Moab was that he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime. They were not content with the death of the king of Edom, but had to vent their wrath upon the body, burning it into lime. This was done as an expression of their hatred and contempt. Verse 2 shows that God hates such an unreasoning and unreasonable display of wrath. As punishment, Amos says the Lord will send a fire upon Moab to destroy it, and devour the palaces of Kerioth. Kerioth is thought to have been the new capital of Moab and was composed of several different towns or burroughs. Moab was to go down in tumult as the warriors shout with the blast of the trumpet. Verse 3, the Lord will destroy their judge (*appointed to govern and minister justice*) or king, and slay all the leaders under him (*either by birth, or by office*).

Amos 2:4-5 Judah's Transgressions

2:4 Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:— Judah's sin is similar to Israel's. They have despised and rejected the law of God and have failed to keep His commandments, therefore, God will not hold back punishment upon them. The Law is God's instruction. ¹This instruction process implies a teacher-student relationship. When the Israelites rejected God's instruction contained in His law, they rejected the Instructor as well. Their relationship with

¹ <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/22384/eVerseID/22384>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

Him quickly deteriorated and now they are breaking His commandments. They do not love God's truth enough to change. This

was Judah's problem, and it could be ours if we are not careful.

2:5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem. God is not partial in His judgment. Although Judah has been privileged above all peoples, they must likewise bear the judgment of God; in this case, fire. This judgment was actually realized in 586 B.C. when the palaces were destroyed by fire as Nebuchadnezzar's army captured the city.

Amos 2:6-8 Israel's Transgressions

2:6 Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;—²The Israelites' immorality fell into three major areas:

- 1) Indifference to and oppression of the poor.
- 2) Covetousness displayed by placing primary importance on material possessions.
- 3) Unrestricted promotion of self-advantage—doing anything to anyone to get their way.

³This is speaking of the judges taking bribes and condemning the innocent. Sandals were very important in their land, and for a man to take your shoes, was cruel and unusual punishment. They sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes by proclaiming them guilty in the courts. The unrighteous judges were readily bribed even by so small amount as a pair of shoes. The main cause against Israel is that their unbridled greed and lust was permitted to run rampant in the land; failing to render righteous judgments in behalf of the poor. The fact that the poor are always a concern to God and are continuously scorned by Israel is seen in the fact that Israel is called to account for its sin of despising the poor several times throughout the course of this prophecy.

2:7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek:— To "*pant after*" means to hasten; eagerly thirst for it. These oppressors desired eagerly to see the poor (*helpless; impoverished*) crushed to the earth, so miserable as to scatter dust on their heads, thereby filling their heads and covering their faces with it; causing them to put their mouths in the dust, and be humble suppliants to them. They wanted to pervert their whole way; turn the needy out of the way.

2:7b ...and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:— This is shown from the fact that both father and son seek the sexual favors of the same woman—probably one of the temple prostitutes such as those attached to temples of the idol goddess Astarte, thus dishonoring God—profaning His holy Name

2:8 And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god. The garments mentioned are the outer garments. The rich squeezed every penny out of the poor, even requiring them to relinquish overnight their outer garments, often used as a cover when sleeping. "*They drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god*" meant their worship of false gods. They were a greedy self-indulgent society. They hated the authority of God.

SUMMARY:

Judah and Israel transgressed God. He sent Amos to prophesy that He will not hold back His punishment against them.

² <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/22386/eVerseID/22386>

³ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/amos/02.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>