

Amos

Amos has a message which applies to today as much as it did when it was written around 2800 years ago. Amos speaks in a powerful way against injustice, and against formal but cold religion. God wants true worship that comes from a person's heart and not outward religion which is designed to show other people how good you are. He wants us to show, by our actions that we truly belong to Him. God also wants people to be honest with each other and he does not want the rich and powerful people getting richer at the expense of the poor people.

Amos first appeared around 750 BC, when King Uzziah reigned in Judah which was a time of great prosperity in the area. He was from the village of Tekoa which is located south of Jerusalem in the kingdom of Judah. He was sent to work in the northern kingdom of Israel which meant that he was a foreigner preaching to Israel. Amos was apparently a successful shepherd and farmer. Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah were prophets at the same time.

Amos preached about 30 years before the northern kingdom was conquered by Assyria and then disappeared from history. Although Amos was appointed by God, he was opposed by the people he preached to. His message was not popular because he confronted the people with their sins and threatened punishment. As so often happens, the people, in their prosperity, abandoned God. Rich people often depend on themselves for their needs because they feel they no longer need God. The people were very sinful and disobedient to God's laws.

We will now study Amos 1:1-2 and 7:10-17 together.

We see from chapter 7:11 that Amos's message is telling the people that they are going to die by the sword and be sent into exile. We read that the people did not like the message, and tried to chase Amos away.

Amos was presented with three temptations which are commonly presented to preachers. These are:

1. Being tempted to misrepresent. This happens when you preach truths which are not popular and you get attacked for this so the temptation is to change the message a little so that it is more acceptable to the people. An example is when preaching that something is a sin such as divorce or polygamy and we change our message so that we make the sin sound like it is not very bad. We must not do this; we must boldly preach the truths of God's Bible.

2. Another temptation is self-interest. This is the temptation to preach messages that will make you popular and make you prosperous. This is when you preach messages that are popular instead of true messages that are unpopular. An example is when you preach messages such as messages promising "health, wealth, and prosperity." Chapter 7:12 says Amos should leave Bethel and go back to his home land where he will be more prosperous, but it is better to preach the word of God faithfully to a small poor church than to be the pastor of a large prosperous church where you can't be faithful to the truth.

3. The third temptation is to yield to the authorities and preach what is approved by leaders of the church or business leaders or government leaders, instead of the truths of the Bible. An example is when the government says you can't preach a sermon that declares that homosexuality is a sin. Meanwhile in Leviticus 20:13 the Bible

says clearly that in God's eyes homosexuality is a sin. There are places such as Sweden where the government will arrest a person who preaches about homosexual behavior being a sin.

This temptation to preach what people might approve of instead of what the Bible says can also keep a preacher, in Africa, from preaching a sermon from 2 Corinthians 12:14. This verse teaches that exorbitant bride prices are wrong. 2 Corinthians 12:14 teaches that children are not to provide for their parents, and this message might upset some of the church members who want to collect a big bride price. Another Bible verse which will upset some members is 1 Timothy 5:8 which teaches that having more many children to support than you can is a sin.

We see that Amos was attacked for his message in verses 10-13 of chapter 7. Amaziah made charges that Amos was conspiring against the king of Israel. He told Amos to leave Israel and go home to his home country and to never return to Israel. Amos stayed in Israel because he was bold and obeyed God.

Amos replied in verses 14-17 and predicted great disaster for Amaziah and the kingdom of Israel. He tells Amaziah and Israel that the threats he makes against Israel and the people are threats from God; he says that it is God speaking and not Amos. Amos shows us that we must be bold when we teach the hard messages from the Bible and we must not avoid the truths of the Bible. We must be careful to be faithful to the Bible and not teach our own thoughts, and we must teach the truth even when we know it will cause us to suffer.

We learn at least three lessons in the book of Amos:

1. We learn that God is a righteous God who demands that His people be righteous. We must work to live the way God wants us to live; particularly toward others.
2. As God says in Amos 5:21-22, He hates formal and empty religion. Many people can look as if they are worshipping when they attend worship at their church, but often it is only a show so that other people can think they are so religious. Our worship must come from our hearts if it is to please God. It is good at the beginning, of the worship service, to pray and ask God to forgive us of our sins so that we begin worship with clean hearts.

The third lesson, from Amos 5:14-15, is that we must do good things and live what the Bible teaches about loving God and other people. In other words do what we preach and teach and not just say good words. We must hate evil and try to do good deeds and then we can go and worship God in a way which is pleasing to Him.

In chapter 1:2 Amos tells the people that they must pay attention. When Amos says the lion roars he is saying that God is speaking and God roars like a lion because He is angry and He has a frightening message for the people. "The pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers," alerts the people that a drought is coming. Mt Carmel is usually a moist place in the dry area of Israel, but God is promising judgment for Israel's sins as he is telling the people that a normally moist place is going to be dry.

In verse 3 for the first time Amos uses the phrase “for three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron”. A threshing sledge is made of heavy boards fastened together. The bottom of these boards have strips of sharp iron attached so that they can tear grain loose from the stalks when the sledge is pulled over the grain. The picture is that Damascus tortured people just like they had pulled these threshing sledges over their bodies. The expression that for three transgressions and for four means that God is saying that He is going to severally punish Israel because they continue to sin many times and these are very bad sins. He is not punishing them for just one or two sins.

In chapters 1-2:16 we see Amos in the kingdom of Israel preaching a sermon about how God is going to bring judgment down on surrounding nations along with Judah and Israel for their sins. The first countries that Amos (chapters 1:3-10) lists for punishment are all enemies of Israel. Punishment for these enemies is good in the eyes of the Jews; these countries are Syria (Damascus), Philistia (Gaza), and Phoenicia (Tyre). The next countries listed for punishment, are Edom (Teman or Bozrah), Ammon (Rabbah), and Moab (Kerioth) who are all blood relatives to the people of Israel. The people of Israel are not so happy with the punishment of these relatives, but it is still acceptable because God is still punishing other people and not the people of Israel. We see this in Chapter 1:11-2:3.

Chapter 2:4-5 mentions that the next country slated for punishment is Judah. The message is now uncomfortably close to home because this punishment is coming to fellow Jews, but the people of Israel still accept it because, after all, other people are being punished. Their crime is different than the other nations already listed. Their crimes are spiritual, and are crimes against God.

Now in chapter 2:6-16, Amos shows that he is a very bold man because he is in Israel and he pronounces punishment on Israel. It was all right when he was talking about other people, but here he is a foreigner speaking against the people of Israel, and he instantly became extremely unpopular.

Again, the lesson here is that we must be faithful to God and always faithfully preach His message from the Bible no matter if the message is popular or not. We must seek to please God first and not man- even if it puts us in danger. Many pastors preach what is popular to please their people and this is wrong. Our sermons are not supposed to “tickle people’s ears” instead we must often “step on their toes.” Good Bible preaching helps convicts people of their sins.

Why was God going to punish these nations? First we look at chapter one verses 3 and 6 to see that God was punishing Damascus and Gaza because these cities were extremely cruel to those they conquered. The threshing sledges of iron were heavy sledges which were tools used to crush grain to separate the kernels of wheat from the chaff. Gaza sold entire villages off into slavery. So the crime was their extreme cruelty.

God next mentioned the punishment of Tyre and Edom. Tyre is to be punished for extreme cruelty because Tyre sold off entire villages into slavery just like Gaza (verse 9). Edom was descended from Esau and were related to Israel and Judah. Their crime was (verse 11) that Edom joined enemies of Judah to attack Judah and

to take advantage of Judah. Obadiah, the next book of the Bible shows that God is angry because of brother attacking brother. The people of Edom were all descendants of Abraham.

Next Amos threatens two more foreign nations, again for extreme cruelty. Chapter 1 verse 13 tells us that Amos is to be punished for cutting open and killing the pregnant women of Gilead. This is an attack against the next generation, children, which God hates just as He hates abortion. Moab's sin mentioned was exhibiting hatred by destroying the graves of Edom's kings (chapter 2:1).

In chapter 2:4 Amos moves into danger as he now attacks Judah which is a people closely related to Israel. Amos says the people have rejected God and disobeyed His laws. Judah and Israel should both have known better than the earlier nations God condemned through Amos because Judah and Israel had God's law. The other nations did not have God's law but they knew that they were wrong to be so cruel. All humans are born knowing that certain things such as murder is wrong.

F. Chapter 2 verse 4 tells one of the reasons the Jews will be punished is that they have rejected God's laws and disobeyed Him. God treats both the people of Israel and Judah the same because they are one people in God's eyes.

i. Verse 4 also tells that another sin was that God's chosen people worshipped other gods.

G. Now Amos moves into a very dangerous area in verses 6-8 when he attacks the sins of Israel. Remember Amos, a foreigner, is preaching in Israel to a group of Israel citizens. He, now, reports a list of crimes which is directed against Israel. The picture given in the following verses describe a totally corrupt society where the rich steal from the poor to get even richer. Their specific crimes are:

1. The first crime found in verse 6 is economic oppression. This is the meaning of selling the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals. This crime is cheating poor people out of what they need; both for big things such as silver or even for small things such as a pair of sandals.
2. The second crime found in verse 7a is that the rich people do all they can to keep the poor people as poor as they can. They cheat the poor people to keep them poor.
3. The third crime is also found in verse 7b which talks about the crime of immorality; specifically sexual sins.
4. The fourth crime in verse 8 is taking the warm clothes away from the poor. This crime is specifically forbidden in Exodus 22:26-27
5. The fifth crime is found at the end of verse 8 where it says they drink the wine of people who have paid a fine. This is the sin of using the corrupt courts to take away the money of the poor by unfairly fining the people so that they can spend the money of the poor people.

H. The conclusion of this first sermon by Amos is found in chapter 2:9-16.

i. God reminds the people in verses 9-11 of all that He has done for them and that they owe their success to Him.

ii. In verses 13-16 Amos tells the people that all sinners will be judged and God will play no favorites. Every person will be judged the same no matter where he comes from. A problem Amos is addressing here is one that continues to be a problem even in today's church. The Jews felt that, since they were God's chosen people, they would not be severely punished by God. Well, Amos came to their country to tell them they

were wrong. All people will be judged by God and judged based on their own actions and not their family relationship. Church attendance and membership will not save you. Only being a true Christian will save you.

Today we listen to Amos and we agree with his message and we say preach on. Today we need to realize that our society is guilty of many of the sins mentioned by Amos. For example:

1. Often, only the rich and powerful get justice in our courts.
2. Often people are cheated in the markets, and sometimes they are cheated by Christians.
3. Sexual immorality is very common. Even Christians sometimes look at a woman with lustful eyes. Sometimes Christians look at pornography.

Amos has taught that all people are to be judged and punished for their sins. They are not excused from their responsibility because of ignorance. Israel is supposed to know and behave better because they know God's laws. Amos tells them that they will not be excused from judgment just because they are God's chosen people.

In chapter 3:1-2 Amos begins a new sermon. He starts by pointing out that Israel, of all people on earth, should be faithful to God because God has done so much for Israel. However, the morals of the people of the northern kingdom were so bad that they were worse than those of many of the surrounding pagan nations. The church is supposed to operate at a higher standard than the surrounding unsaved people. It is sad but, many times, there is no difference between the church members and those not connected to the church. For example, the divorce rate for both groups (at least in America) is about the same.

Look at what God did for His people:

1. God chose them to be His special people. He chose them out of all the other people on earth. He did not choose Abraham because Abraham was a man with spiritual understanding and faith in God. Abraham was a pagan when God chose him. God chose the people of Israel because He wanted to for His own reasons. Read Romans 9:11-15 to confirm this. If you are a Christian, then you were chosen by God.
2. God delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Romans chapter six tells us that God has delivered all Christians from the bondage of sin. We are no longer slaves to sin.
3. Israel, by reason of being chosen out of all the people on earth, has a special responsibility to God. God's chosen people have a higher responsibility to follow and obey God than other people on earth. Luke 12:47-48 teaches that people who have heard the truth about Jesus and rejected Him will be punished more severely than those who never heard, about Jesus, at the time of judgment.
4. God provided prosperity for Israel.

In verse 2 God in a direct way tells the people that He is going to punish them. This should not be a surprise to the people of Israel for God plainly told the people of Israel earlier that they would be punished for their sins. (Leviticus 24:14-33)

Now in verses 3-6 God ask seven leading questions which are meant to show Israel that God has no choice so He has decided to punish her. The questions prove to Israel that she deserves to be punished. These questions are:

1. Verse 3 ask will two walk together unless they have agreed to. The meaning of this is that just as two people walk together by agreement of both people so do these two friends quit walking together when their

friendship is finished. God is saying that His friendship with Israel is over because of Israel's sinful actions and he will no longer walk with Israel. To not be a friend of God is frightening.

2. Verse 4a talks about a lion roaring. A lion roars when the prey has no chance of escaping. God is roaring because His prey which is Israel has no chance to escape judgment. They should submit to God and accept their punishment.

3. Verse 4b tells Israel that the young lion is crying in his den. This is because he is already eating his prey. In other words Israel is already condemned by her sins and it is as if she has already been punished. John 3:18 tells us that we also are condemned if we don't believe in Jesus. The things that Israel and we consider blessings such as wealth and prosperity are causing her to sin and be devoured.

4. Verse 5a tells the idea of a bird being trapped when bait is set in the trap. Sin was the bait for the trap that was set and Israel chose this bait; sin. Sin is always waiting to trap us; we must pray and ask God's help as we seek to avoid sin and do what is correct in God's eyes and not sin.

5. Verse 5b tells us that the troubles coming to Israel are because they are so guilty and deserve these punishments. The snare comes up from the ground because there is something for the snare to catch and this is sinful Israel.

6. Verse 6a has the idea that the people should tremble in fear because punishment is coming from God. James 2:19 tells us that even the demons shudder in fear because they know God's punishment is coming. The people of Israel are so comfortable in their sins that they no longer fear the punishment of God. They have forgotten that God's judgment is very terrible.

7. Verse 6b tells us that it is God who is doing the punishment. It is clear that God will punish sin. He did it thousands of years ago and He does it today because God never changes.

Verses 7-8 tells us that God gives many warnings before He punished the people for their sins. The main message of the prophets is to deliver warnings, from God, to the people to quit sinning before it is too late and God sends punishment. Today it is the preacher/Bible teacher who uses the messages of the Bible to warn everyone to believe in Jesus and be saved from the wrath of God. This message must be constantly preached and taught.

Chapter 3:9-15 tells us that Israel is blind to its own sins, but Israel is so sick that the whole world can see this sickness and everybody knows she is going to be punished.

We see in verses 9&10 God telling the whole world about the sins of His people. He shows the rest of the world that Israel's sins have gotten so bad that they are even greater than the sins of the surrounding pagan nations. There is a message here to the modern church and to Christians. We see three truths:

A. Israel was supposed to be a light to the world. They were to carefully observe God's law to the world and be a good example. Christians according to Matthew 5:14,16 are to show the light of Christ to the world. We are to be good examples to the world. We are to spread this light to the whole world.

B. The whole world is watching Christians; they expect to see Christians being a good example. When Christians delight in showing sin to the world we drive people away from Jesus. When Israel was showing her sins to the world she should have been ashamed and turned to God in faith and repentance. The church must do the same.

C. It is extra bad when people who claim to belong to God behave so badly. God's people are to live lives in obedience to God. We are to treat others the way we want to be treated. Often though like Israel in Amos's time Christians are as sinful as the rest of the world. Often, the modern church shows the same sinfulness to

the world as non-Christians do. This is because many people who call themselves Christians are not really Christian.

In verses 11&12 God tells Israel that it doesn't matter how rich and powerful Israel is, Israel will be quickly and totally destroyed. The meaning of where it says "As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed" is that only a few people and a very small part of the possessions of Israel will be left; most will be destroyed.

Verses 13-15 continue to describe the almost total destruction coming to Israel. Verse 13 tells that the sins of Israel against God are to be made known. In verse 14 God is telling that He is very angry about the false worship taking place at Bethel and He will destroy these places of false worship. Verse 15 tells that the destruction of Israel will be complete including the wealthy people of the country.

The first part of chapter 4 talks about the wealthy people and their fate. In verses 1-3 Amos starts talking about the cows of Bashan. Bashan was where the grazing land was very rich and the cows were fat and healthy. So Amos is talking about rich people and attacking them because they gained their wealth by oppressing people. There is nothing wrong with gaining wealth by honest means but often people get wealthy by cheating and oppressing other people. Another fault of the rich is that often they live only to please themselves.

God goes on in verses 2-3 to tell the rich people that severe judgment is coming on them; their prosperity is going to end. The words about hooks and fishhooks refers to what often happened when a country was conquered by another country. Hooks with lines attached were put through people's lips and they were led away into captivity. So God is promising that these people would become conquered and taken to a foreign place.

Verses 4-5 talk about a common problem which happens to people when a society gets rich. The people lose interest in God and often say there is no God. If they worship God they don't follow God's rules for worship; instead they make up their own type of worship which they design to please themselves and not God. Amos 5:21 tells us that God hates their empty manmade worship. This is what has happened in the rich places such as Europe and North America. Rich people often think they can live without God, but they are totally wrong.

Amos in chapter 4 verses 6-11 gives warnings to Israel that they had better stop their evil ways before it is too late and they are totally destroyed. God here is specifically talking to His people; not all the people of the world. These warnings come in the form of small judgments or punishments. Let's look at these five warnings:

1. Verse 6 says God used famine to warn them.
2. Verses 7&8 says God used drought to warn them.
3. Verse 9 says God sent mildew and locust to destroy their crops.
4. Verse 10 tells that war and disease were judgments God sent to warn the people.
5. Verse 11 warns that God also uses earthquakes as judgment.

These five things had recently occurred in Israel. The people were familiar with these judgments and they should have taken warning from them and obeyed God. However, they did not turn back to God so in verse 12 they are told to prepare to meet their God and to be terribly punished.

Amos finishes this chapter in verse 13 by reminding the people who God is. He reminds them that God is all powerful. People should do what God wants and not challenge Him to punish them because as verse 13 says He is God and He can punish them as much as He wants to, and His punishment really hurts.

In chapter 5:1-3 God is announcing Israel's death as a nation which soon happens. In a few short years Assyria conquers Israel and takes the people away. Israel is finished as an independent nation.

In chapter 5:4-17 we see three things which confirm that we must seek God and follow His ways to truly live:

1. Man-made religion is not real. Often men, in their churches, will invent a religion they enjoy. They make up a false religion with pleasing worship which is designed to make them feel good; they don't want to hear the truth that man is a terrible person lost in his sin without the salvation that Jesus offers. We don't want to hear about living lives that please God, and call for stopping our favorite sins. Instead we want to live with all our favorite sins, see verse 11, and still be all right with God.

2. God's punishment for unrepentant sin is a sure thing. The false worship we just talked about is hated by God. This is what is being said in verse 5 when he says do not seek Bethel, Gilgal, or Beersheba. God mentions these three cities because this is where the false worship that he hates is taking place. Verses 16-17 promise judgment for the sins of the people. We must remember that it is God, and God alone, who defines what sin is and what is not sin.

3. In verses 4 & 6 we see the free offer of the gospel. God freely offers us a choice to avoid His certain judgment. This is the message found in Romans 10:9 which says that "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. The message in Amos and the New Testament is the same; following Jesus is the only source of peace with God and the source of eternal life.

We also learn from verses 4-17 three things that apply to the church today:

1. There is much opposition, in churches, to preaching only the truths of the Bible. Most people want to feel good about themselves. They want to hear false messages promising a prosperous life to Christians and promises of healing miracles, etc. If you preach the truth from verses like 2 Timothy 3:12, that life is often very difficult for Christians you will often be unpopular with people. You have to choose who you want to please; do you want to please God or man. 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 helps us understand if we are really Christians. True Christians love to hear the true messages from the Bible while the non-believer wants to hear messages that make him feel good.

2. A faithful man of God only preaches the truths from the Bible. He is faithful to God's word no matter how difficult and unpopular the message is.

3. We know that in the end God's purposes will always win. The book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ confirms that Jesus is the final victor.

Chapter 5:18 Amos tells the people to beware of the coming day of the Lord. The day of the Lord is often mentioned in the Bible. Examples are Isaiah 13:6, Joel 1:15, Malachi 4:5 which depict the “Day of the Lord” as being a terrible time when God brings fierce judgment. The day of the Lord is described in 2 Peter 3:10 as the day of the Lord’s wrath; a horrible time for the person who is not a Christian.

We will look at what Amos is saying about the threat to the people and the people’s attitude.

1. Verse 18 is a warning to the people who are so sinful that they don’t even realize they are such terrible sinners and so they welcome the day of the Lord. These unrepentant sinners should fear the day of the Lord because it is a day when they will suffer terribly. However, many people are not realistic and they fail to understand their fate as unrepentant sinners.
2. Verses 18-20 tell that there is no escaping the punishment God is bringing to you. You run from one threat such as a lion and a bear gets you because you can’t hide anywhere in safety including your own house where a snake is waiting to attack you. God is everywhere.
3. In verses 21-23 God describes the kind of worship He hates. It is a strong statement from God when He says He hates religion. He is saying He hates false worship where people are only worshipping God externally. These are people who make a great public show of their worship but they don’t belong to God and their worship is not real. In verse 22 God says he will not accept false worship from people whose hearts are cold to Him. In verse 23 He tells them to keep their false worship far away from Him.

Let us study what the day of the Lord will be like for the unrepentant sinner.

1. Verse 18 describes it as a day of darkness. Hell is described in Matthew 8:12 and Jude 1:13 as a place of complete darkness. The Bible often associates light with the presence of God; see Psalm 104:2, John 8:12 and John 9:5. The “Day of the Lord” which Amos described is a time of terrible judgment. It is a time when you are separated from God which means separation from anything good; look at James 1:17. They will be completely separated from anything good forever, and exist in total darkness.
2. The person will also be in complete isolation. He will hate all other people and not want any company.
3. The person will have no hope because the suffering will be so bad and there is absolutely no hope of the suffering ever ending; it will last for all eternity.

Verses 24-27 God again tells the people there is a way to avoid the wrath of God. Verse 24 says they could follow God’s laws and obey God. In verse 25 God is saying that He is not interested in their sacrifices rather God wants them to obey the laws given at Sinai. In verse 26 Amos is saying that the people are worshipping idols. God is telling the people that it is not yet too late to save themselves from the wrath of God.

The “Day of the Lord” is not a wonderful day for the Christian because it is the day that the Christian meets Jesus and goes to be with Him. This makes the day of the Lord a wonderful day for the Christian.

Chapter 6 is an attack on the people who are complacent and satisfied with the way things are. This was wrong in the time of Amos and it is wrong in the church today. Many Christians don’t seem to realize that there is a spiritual war going on. As long as life is good, they are satisfied and don’t mind about all the lost

people surrounding them and they avoid confronting evil. We see this in western churches where the church avoids evangelism and especially foreign missions. Most Christians avoid trying to stop evil such as abortion and the spread of homosexual marriage. Matthew 16:24 is only one example of many in the Bible that teaches that we Christians are to be active in serving God. Often Christians don't seem to be aware that disaster surrounds them and is a constant threat.

Even though Amos was written over two thousand years ago, the message could have been written for today. It seems as if Amos wrote his book to Uganda and the United States because these countries are guilty of the same sins as Israel was. The United States is just like Israel was during Amos's time; the people became lazy because of their wealth and luxuries.

Verses 1-3 tell that one reason the people are lazy and complacent is because they feel secure from attack by their enemies. Samaria was a city on a mountain which made the people feel it was secure from attack. The United States feels secure from attack because they have a large and powerful military. The people relax instead of doing the Lord's work. Countries should rely on God for their protection instead of their own power.

Verses 4-7 tell that this time of wealth and laziness is going to come to an end. Amos is not saying that resting and luxuries are bad by themselves. He is attacking them when these things become all important to a person. When they become more important than serving God. Many Americans do not serve as foreign missionaries because they don't want to sacrifice their luxuries and their families by living in a foreign country. Amos gives some examples of when luxuries are a problem:

1. Verse 6:4 says they are wrong when they become so important that people concentrate on them and neglect their duties to God. Many Americans spend small fortunes on their luxuries and never give any money to help hungry people. There is a hotel room in New York City in America which charges \$50,000 for one night.
2. Verse 6:5 tells that sometimes people concentrate on entertainment. For example there are a championship football game cost \$4639. Another example is when common working people spend over a hundred dollars for each person to enter an amusement park.
3. Verse 6:6a talk about excessive spending on wine. For example there is a wine from France which sells for \$12,891 for one bottle.
4. Their vanity in verse 6b causes them to spend a lot of money on oils and lotions for their bodies. From Japan you can buy 50 grams of lotion to spread on your body for \$13,000.

Often the rich get the money to buy these luxuries by cheating the poor people. Therefore verse 7 says these rich people will be the first to suffer when judgment comes.

In verses 8-14 God makes a promise to destroy wealthy and sinful Israel. He will do this because He hates the wicked nation that Israel has become.

What can each person do to keep from suffering this judgment from God? You must believe in Jesus and repent of your sins, and follow Jesus.

Chapters 7:1-9 and 8:1-9:10 contain five visions of judgment. Chapter 9:11-15 closes the book of Amos by looking forward to the Messianic age; a time of blessing.

The first vision is found in chapter 7:1-3 where God is threatening to bring a plague of locusts which would eat the harvest. There were two mowing's of the grass; the first harvest was a tax which belonged to the king. The people got their food from the second harvest which means Amos was promising starvation for the people because the locust were to come after the first mowing and they would eat the people's food. Amos pleaded with God to spare the people and God does answer his prayer and spares the people from the locust.

The second vision is found in verses 4-6 and is one about the fire which is actually threatening a drying, in other words, a drought of the land. Once again Amos pled with God not to do this and again God spared the people from this judgment.

The third vision is pictured in verses 7-9 and talks about God holding up a plumb line. God is saying that He is measuring or examining Israel to see if Israel is behaving the way God expects. We know that Israel is not living the way God expects so, in verse 9, God threatens to destroy Israel. We can only avoid this destruction if we will as Acts 16:31 says -believe in the Lord Jesus and, as Acts 2:38 says, repent and be baptized.

The plumb line which God uses to measure or test His church by is the Bible. Does your church honor and obey the Bible? Do you honor and obey the Bible? We know that we can't perfectly obey the Bible. But we are as Christians to try to obey God and make the Bible the standard we live by. Fortunately God's grace covers our sins when we fall short.

The rest of chapter 7:10-17 is a report about an attack on Amos by Amaziah, the local religious leader, who brings charges against Amos to the king. Amaziah orders Amos to stop preaching in Israel and to go back to his own country. Amos is bold and he does what God orders and tells Amaziah in verse 17 that Amaziah and the nation will come to an end. We must always be bold and preach the truths from the Bible no matter how dangerous.

The fourth vision is found in chapter 8 and, at first, in verses 1-3. It talks about a bowl of summer fruit which is ready for harvest, and this seems good. However, in verse 2-3 we see that the message is that Israel itself is the bowl of fruit and that Israel is ripe for God's judgment. There will be no further blessings from God. Verse 3 says "silence" and it is just like in Romans 3:19. The people are guilty and there is nothing they can say to God.

Verses 5-6 talk about how the people outwardly keep the Sabbath, but their thoughts are not on worshipping God. They can't wait for worship to end and they are actually busy planning their business deals while pretending to worship; even ones where they will cheat others.

Verses 7-10 describe the judgment coming for their sins. He is going to turn their religious celebrations into mourning, and their singing into songs of sorrow.

Verse 11 describes a terrible famine coming. This is a famine of the word of God. It is a time when the true preaching of the Bible is absent from the land. We see this in Africa where the Bible is not preached or taught. The result of this is a society where true Christianity is rare and people suffer terribly because of things like tribalism, corruption, and bad government in general. Sadly the United States has largely abandoned Bible preaching.

Verse 12 tells how the people will be without direction and how they will search for meaning but they do not find it in their lives apart from God. The famine will be so bad that true Bible preaching can't be found. In many areas it is difficult to find a Bible preaching church and this is the reason we have Africans Teaching Africans; we want to people to be able to easily find a Bible preaching church wherever they live.

True Christianity only exist where there is true Bible preaching. When Christians and churches abandon the truths of the Bible, God will abandon the people. We see this in many lands where Christianity was previously strong, but now these places are mostly pagan. This is true in most of Europe and Canada and now the United States. George Washington, the first president of the United States said, "It is impossible to rightly govern a nation without God and the Bible." He is so right.

The last vision we find is in chapter 9:1-10, and it tells of the final end of Israel. God pronounces the end of His special covenant relationship with Israel. Less than 50 years after Amos delivers his prophecy Israel is destroyed by the Assyrians. We read in these verses that there is no escaping God's judgment, and this applies to us today.

Israel has had a special covenant relationship with God but in verses 7-10 God reminds Israel that that this special relationship does not allow Israel to disobey God without being punished by God. God will fiercely punish all sinners including Israel and Church people.

In verse 7 God says Israel is just like the other countries such as Cush (Ethiopia) when it comes to being punished for disobedience. God expects His people to obey Him and He will punish them when they do not obey. This includes Israel, Judah, and the church. Let's look at these verses 7-10 to show how God treats all sinners:

1. Verse 7a the phrase, "Sons of Israel" causes the people of Israel to think they are special and that they do not need to obey God. They are proud and accept the privileges of being God's people but they don't accept the obligation of behaving the way God's people should behave. We Christians must remember to behave differently from the world so that our behavior will be a good testimony to God as we serve God and obey the Bible.
2. "Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt" in verse 7b means that the Israel people felt that since God had rescued them, from Egypt, in the past that He will continue to rescue them. Amos tells that God has no obligation to continue to rescue Israel.
3. Remember Israel according to verse 8b is now a sinful nation just like the other nations.
4. The people believe, see verse 10, that they are special and that disaster will not happen to them. People want to believe that disaster happens to the other person but not themselves. Often when disaster threatens, people think they can ignore the warning to flee the danger because they think only the other person will be hurt. In 2005 the biggest storm of modern times damaged a large area of the United States. More than a thousand people died in the storm because they ignored all warnings to flee to safety; they believed the

disaster would only happen to someone else and not to themselves. This kind of thinking is why people put off making a decision to accept the free offer of salvation given through Jesus. They wait until it is too late.

God says in verses 8-9 that He will not destroy every person of Israel. He will preserve His faithful remnant. He will always preserve his faithful followers.

Verses 11-12 talk about the restoration of David's tent. This is talking about the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus who will sit on King David's throne forever according to Psalm 132:12. This messianic kingdom will remove all separation between Israel and the other countries. People from all nations will together make up the covenant people of God. (Revelation 5:9) All of God's people shall be known as Christians, and they shall all be brothers and sisters.

Verses 13-15 talk about the future glory of the church. It is difficult to apply verses 13&14, and there is disagreement among Bible scholars about the application.

I believe, a good interpretation of verse 13 is that it is talking about blessings in belonging to the kingdom of God. Some of the blessings are for our current life and some for our heavenly life. It is not promising that all of God's people will be prosperous. The blessings being promised are: people becoming Christians and people living in Christian homes. It means living in a place where there is law and order and there is no corruption. The more Christianity spreads the better life will become until the end of this age and the perfect glory of the church in heaven.

Verse 14 may be talking about the return of Israel's people to its homeland of Israel.

Verse 15 is easier to understand. The blessings of being a Christian are permanent and will never be taken away. This is what John 10:28 says, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

Obadiah

We don't know who the Obadiah was who wrote this book or when he wrote the book although it is thought that it was written after the fall of Jerusalem. Even though it is the shortest book, of the Old Testament, it has lessons for us. God has much patience but there is a limit to His patience and when His patience is finished, His judgment is very severe. This was true in Old Testament times and it is still true today.

Obadiah is a prophecy dealing with the destruction of Edom, a country which was both a long time enemy of Israel and a relative. Jacob's brother, Esau, was the founder of Edom. Edom had, throughout its history, been an enemy of Israel. Edom felt secure in its homeland which was east of the Jordan River. The country is very mountainous and very easy to defend against attack. Today this land is part of the Muslim country of Jordan.

Even though Edom and Israel are related it seemed that, whenever possible, Edom acted against Israel. For example, Moses asked permission from the king of Edom to take the people of Israel through Edom on their way to the Promised Land of Canaan. The story, as recorded in Numbers 20:14-21, tells how the king of Edom

threatened war if the Israelites entered Edom. Later in Numbers 24 Balaam predicts the conquest of Edom by Israel.

Let's look briefly at the history of Edom. Genesis 14:5-6 reports the defeat of the Horites in the hill country of Seir which is the name of Edom in Abraham's time. Later in Genesis 32 & 33 we read about Jacob and Esau; we read that Esau lived in Seir in the land of Edom. Later during the Exodus, Moses asked permission to take the people of Israel through Edom on their journey to the Promised Land, but the Edomites refused even though Moses offered to pay them. Later 2 Samuel 8:13-14 reports that King David conquered Edom.

I. The first message of the book is found in chapter 1:1-9, and this is about the sin of pride, which results in the destruction of Edom. Edom was a rich country and they felt that nobody could conquer their country. Edom was rich because many caravans carrying merchandise passed through Edom and paid a tax to Edom. Edom felt secure in her mountain forts and relied on these for protection instead of God.

We read in verse 3 that the main reason Edom was destroyed was because of this pride. Often we think that pride is a minor sin but God sees pride as a major problem. Isaiah reports that pride is the reason for the fall of Satan. Read Isaiah 14:12-15, "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit."

Edom was proud for several reasons. One big reason Edom was so proud was that she put all her faith for protection in the very high mountains. These mountains were very easy to defend by the armies and weapons of the time. Verse 3 records how the people boasted in their ability to defend themselves. They trusted their mountains for their defense instead of Trusting God.

God in verses 4 & 5 tells the people that He will cause their destruction, and as verse four describes the destruction, it will be worse than if their destruction was caused by a human army. The destruction will be complete; nothing, of value, will be left.

We humans have no reason to be proud. We are sinners and lost in our sins without God saving us. Remember that we can't even do any work to save ourselves. Ephesians 2:8-9 says that God does all the work of saving us. Remember it is Jesus who is to be lifted up and Jesus alone.

Every country that is lifted up and prospers is because God allows it to. Luke 1:52 says that it is God who makes people and countries strong and prosperous. Sadly most people forget this fact and they think they are great because of their own power. Luke 1:52 also tells that it is God who brings people and countries down. We are who we are because God made us this way. Christians are to be humble and not proud and arrogant.

Verse 7 reveals that another reason Edom was proud was that she trusted her strong allies. She thought the countries she was allied with would protect her in times of need. We see in this verse that

these friends would eat Edom's bread when times were good but when war came these human friends would desert Edom.

Verse 8 reveals that another area of pride in Edom was that the rulers thought they were wise and they trusted their own wisdom and failed to seek God's wisdom.

The end result of the sin of their pride is shown in verse 9 to be their total destruction.

This first section of Obadiah teaches us to not be proud and arrogant. Instead of trusting our armed defenses, our friends to protect us, and our own wisdom, we must trust God and recognize all our success belongs to Him. We are totally dependent on God; even for each breath of air we take.

II. The second thought in verses 10-14 is about the sin of not caring for a brother. Edom was a brother nation of Israel and they should have helped each other in times of need. In Deuteronomy 23:7 God tells the people of Israel that they should not scorn the people of Edom because they are brothers. Verse 10 tells Edom that they will be punished for hurting their brother Israel.

God really likes strong families to take care of each other; 1 Timothy 5:8 is a strong warning for each family to provide and care for their family members. Galatians 6:10 tells Christians to help our brother Christians. Christians are known for helping provide for less fortunate brothers. Providing Christian charity is part of being a Christian.

We are not sure of the time that Obadiah is talking about but it was during one of the times when Jerusalem was invaded by an enemy country. We see verification that Edom took advantage of Israel when Israel was suffering from an enemies attack.

Let's look at the progression of sin in the treatment of Edom to Israel.

1. Verse 11 tells us that Edom watched and did not help Israel. We are to help our families when they are being attacked.
2. Verses 12-13 tells us that Edom looked down at their brothers and were happy to see them suffer.
3. Verses 13-14 tells how Edom even took part in hurting Israel. Verse 13 tells that Edom entered the city and took part in looting it. Verse 14 tells that Edom caught people of Israel who were fleeing the city and turned them over to their enemy.

III. The last section of Obadiah starts in verse 15 and talks about God's judgment. Verse 15 tells us that the day of the Lord is near for all nations. This Day of Judgment soon resulted in the end of Edom just as if Edom had never existed. Edom had been very blessed by God until He punished Edom for the sins we have just studied. We know that Jacob and his descendants spent 400 years in Egypt where they became slaves. At the same time Esau's descendants were blessed by God and were living and prospering in Edom. Pride led to the destruction of Edom.

Verses 15-19 talk mostly about the destruction of Edom and also that judgment is near for all peoples. We see in verse 15 again the day of the Lord mentioned so we know judgment is coming. Verse 16 says that many nations enjoyed themselves as they plundered and robbed Jerusalem, but these nations are not going

to enjoy themselves much longer. They will be destroyed and it will be just as if they had never existed. They have enjoyed their drink of pleasure in Jerusalem but they will next drink the cup of God's wrath.

In any case, for Edom the day of the Lord has come and Edom is gone. Many other nations have also gone away forever. All nations will eventually pass away.

The last section of Obadiah, beginning in verse 17, deals with the restoration of Israel. Israel will be punished by God but only for a short time. Edom's punishment will be permanent while Israel is promised a glorious future. There are three things verse 17 teaches us about God's promise of future blessings to Israel. These promises are also promises to Christians. These are:

1. Christians are delivered from the bondage of our sins. Romans 6:6 teaches that we are no longer slaves to sin.
2. Verse 17 talks about being holy. For the Christian this means that God will make us holy. We will be made holy little by little now and perfectly holy when we die.
3. Verse 17 talks about how Israel will possess its own land again, and it tells the Christian that God will provide for all our needs.

Isaiah 63:1-4 is a prophecy about the final judgment when Christ returns. It gives us a picture of the man coming from Edom who has been killing his enemies. The man coming from Edom is Jesus returning to Jerusalem after He has fiercely destroyed all His enemies, especially Edom. When the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took the people into captivity it appeared that Israel was finished as a nation. At the same time, it appeared that Edom was to be a long lasting country secure in its mountains. However Obadiah prophesied the total destruction of Edom and the restoration of Israel.

Here in Isaiah we see that Jesus has destroyed all his enemies on earth specifically having judged Edom. Jesus returns to His people Israel when He is finished with judging the world.

Edom disappeared even before Jesus was born while Israel is still a healthy country. Edom is no more.