

Three More Prophecies of Judgment

Amos 1:9-15

Amos 1:9-15 – *“Thus says the Lord: “For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood. ¹⁰ But I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre that will devour its palaces.*

¹¹ Thus says the Lord: “For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity.

His anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever. ¹² But I will send a fire upon Teman that will devour the palaces of Bozrah.”

¹³ Thus says the Lord: “For three transgressions of the people of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they ripped open the women with child in Gilead, that they might enlarge their territory. ¹⁴ But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour its palaces, amid shouting in the day of battle, and a tempest in the day of the whirlwind. ¹⁵ Their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together,” says the Lord.”

Background Notes

Amos was one of the pre-exilic minor prophets. What do we mean by the terms *pre-exilic* and *minor*? What's the difference between a major prophet and a minor prophet? Were the minor prophets less spiritual than the major prophets? No! It's all about the size of their books! The major prophets wrote larger books. There were four major prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. And there were twelve minor prophets – Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. The minor prophets' books are short enough that, before the printing press, they could be hand copied on a single scroll. In fact, these books circulated as single scrolls.

The term *pre-exilic* means it was written “before the exile” – before the 70-year captivity of the Jews in Babylon in the 6th century BC. There were two **exilic** prophets - prophets who wrote during the captivity - Ezekiel and Daniel. There are three **post-exilic** prophets - prophets who spoke and wrote after the Babylonian captivity - Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. All the rest of the prophets are **pre-exilic** - they prophesied before the 70-year Babylonian captivity. So Amos was a pre-exilic minor prophet. Although he lived in the southern kingdom of Judah, he prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel.

The book of Amos is very easy to outline. There are eight prophecies (chapters 1-2), three sermons (chapters 3-6), and six visions (chapters 7-9). In chapters 1-2, Amos began the eight prophecies of judgment by denouncing the foreign

nations surrounding the nation of Israel - but by the end of chapter 2 he zeroed in on Israel, his main target. In Amos 1:9-15, three more prophecies of judgment were pronounced against the foreign nations surrounding Israel.

Doctrinal Points

1. God will judge the breaking of covenants.

In verses 9-10, Amos prophesied judgment against the city of Tyre and the nation of Phoenicia. What was their outstanding sin? They sold prisoners of war as slaves to Edom (as Philistia did), and in doing so, they broke the “covenant of brotherhood”: “...they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood” (v9).

What was the “covenant of brotherhood”? It was the longstanding covenant or agreement between Israel and Tyre that went all the way back to the time of David and Solomon. 2 Samuel 5:11: “Then Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters and masons. And they built David a house.” And 1 Kings 5:1: “Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, because he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram had always loved David.” And 1 Kings 5:12: “So the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as He had promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty together.”

Years later, Amos referenced this relationship as a “covenant of brotherhood.” God expected that Tyre would keep this covenant with Israel - but Tyre broke its international treaty. As a result, God said Tyre would be judged - and destroyed. This judgment took place first at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian armies. Then later, when Alexander the Great overran the city of Tyre, he sold thirty thousand captives as slaves – and killed the rest. Tyre reaped what it had sown. God will judge the breaking of covenants.

In God’s eyes, the breaking of covenants is wrong. Whether it’s international treaties or the marriage covenant, God will judge the breaking of covenants. In the Noahic Covenant, God gave mankind the right - and the responsibility - to govern himself, and that mandate included keeping the peace treaties made between nations. God holds a nation responsible for the treaties it makes, and He will judge nations that break those covenants. This would include the treaties that were broken by Nazi Germany, or the former Soviet Union, or any nation today. God will judge the breaking of covenants.

2. God will judge hatred of the Jews.

Amos recorded the prophecy of God’s judgment against Edom in verses 11-12. Edom was judged for “pursuing his brother with a sword,” for showing no pity, and for continual furious anger and hatred against the Jews. Remember, the Edomites were descendants of Jacob’s brother Esau, and the Jews, of course, are descendants of Jacob.

The Edomites were guilty of selling Jewish captives as slaves. In verse 11 their deep hatred of the Jewish people was described: “... *he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity. His anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever.*”

What extreme hatred of the Jewish people! Edom would be judged for this sin. In fulfillment of this prophecy Edom was conquered by the Assyrians, and later conquered again by a people known as the Nabataeans. The prophet Obadiah also prophesied Edom's demise. And Edom is no more. God judges hatred of the Jews.

In Genesis 12:2-3, God said to Abraham: “*I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*” God has never rescinded or changed this unconditional covenant that He made with Abraham and his descendants, the “Abrahamic Covenant.” It is still valid today. And it should not be “spiritualized away” from the descendants of Abraham and “applied spiritually” to the Church!

Do a study on the history of the nations that have persecuted the Jews, and you will see that God judges nations that are anti-Semitic. God holds nations accountable for their treatment of the Jewish people.

Furthermore, He holds **individuals** responsible as well. Let me ask you - in your heart, do you bless the Jewish people? Or do you dislike them - think negatively of them - and perhaps even “curse” them? I trust you bless them, because if you do, you will be blessed. Remember, our Savior was a Jew - and yet there are Christians who are anti-Semitic! I hope this is not true of you. God will judge hatred of the Jews.

3. God will judge expansion by extermination.

The prophecy of judgment against Ammon is found in verses 13-15. Ammon was east of Israel, and the area of Ammon is now part of the modern nation of Jordan. In fact, the ancient city of Rabbah (v14) is the modern city of Amman, the capital city of Jordan today. The Ammonites were descendants of Lot, through his relationship with one of his daughters.

The heinous sin of the Ammonites was that, in order to enlarge their territory, they ripped open the pregnant women in the area of Gilead. This is not figurative language - it literally took place. Defenseless women and their unborn children were exterminated - not for self-defense, but simply to expand the territory controlled by Ammon. For this cruel and horrendous sin, God declared that Ammon would be judged. About thirty years after Amos delivered this prophecy, the Assyrians overran Ammon like a whirlwind, burned their capital city, and took the surviving people away into captivity.

Do you see the lesson here? Expansion of power or territory by extermination (in any form) is a horrible crime before God. It's the lowest possible view of human dignity and human life - life that was created and formed in the image of God! Whether the killing fields in Cambodia, or tribal wars of ethnic cleansing in Africa - it will be judged. God will judge the terrible sin of expansion by extermination.

Does this judgment have something to say about God's view of the extermination of the unborn - for the mere "expansion of personal rights"? I think it does. God will judge expansion by extermination.

Practical Application

Examine your heart for jealousy

In verse 11 we saw the sin of Edom's hatred for the Jewish people. Verse 11 said that the Edomites not only pursued their brother (Israel) by the sword, but they showed no pity, and their anger and fury continued unabated. Their hatred never died.

Why this extreme hatred? I don't think there's any doubt that it was rooted in jealousy. Esau's descendants were not God's "chosen people" – God sovereignly chose the descendants of Jacob. Because of the Jews' favored status, the Edomites were jealous of the Jews. They couldn't stand the fact that God had said, "*The older shall serve the younger*" (Genesis 25:23). Their jealousy led to extreme hatred and uncontrolled furious anger.

Do you see the practical application? We all need to examine our hearts for jealousy. (And I'm speaking to myself, too.) Are you jealous of someone? Are you jealous of someone you work with - or maybe a fellow student at your school? Maybe someone "got ahead of you" in some way - maybe even unfairly - and you can't stand it? Or maybe you're jealous of a brother or sister in Christ - maybe someone in your own congregation?

Be careful! The sin of jealousy can lead to hatred - even extreme hatred! And when hatred controls your heart and mind, there's no telling what grievous acts you may commit. You could be out of control without even realizing it. James 1:14-15 says, "*But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*" Many sad examples could be given of jealousy leading to bitter anger and hatred.

So - examine your heart for jealousy!