



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Amos 1:1-2

Amos

“A Roar From Zion”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well, tonight we are going to begin a series in the book of Amos, one of the minor prophets. So turn to the book of Amos. I'm going to look tonight at two chapters. I probably won't take that many chapters after this; I'll do probably one chapter a lesson, but we're going to... This is kind of a unit. It is a unit. So we'll look at chapters 1-2, so I'm not going to read the entire passage. We'll read portions of it as we go through it, but that's our study. So everybody can find Amos. It's after the book of Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos. Why don't we begin with a word of prayer?

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for the time we have this evening. We pray you would bless it. We thank you for the opportunity that we have to be together and to study together. We thank you for the freedom we enjoy to do that, and we thank you for everyone here that is interested in your Word and wants to study it and study one of the minor prophets, one of your prophets you gave your Word. He said he wasn't a prophet or the son of a prophet, but you used him to prophesy and give your warnings to the nation, and as we see this evening, to the nations. And it tells us a great deal about you that you control everything and you bring your will about, and it's righteous. And so, Lord, we pray that as we consider these first two chapters this evening, you bless our time.

Bless those that are maybe travelling still on the roads. Give them safety, and give all of us safety as we go home this evening. We thank you again for the opportunity to be together, to study together. Thank you most of all for the union we have in your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ for what He's done for us, what He's doing for us at this moment, for the judgment that is

indicated in this passage but what we have escaped because of Him. We thank you for all that we are by your grace in and your Son and pray that what we do would glorify you and honor Him. We pray these things in His name. Amen.

[Message] Well, we're looking again at Amos 1-2. Some context first. In 70 B.C., Homer was writing *The Iliad* on the coast of Asia Minor. Farther west, the city of Rome was founded on the Tiber River. And Amos was prophesying in Israel. So civilization was rising in the west as it was declining in the east, and God was directing all of this according to His sovereign will and plan. He rules the nations, and He judges them. That's the teaching of the book of Amos. One stress you find all through this book is the absolute sovereignty of God over the nations. Nations, particularly two, they're the main focus of this book – Israel and Judah – but particularly Israel because that's the subject of most of this book. But we see the sovereignty over the nations particularly in the first two chapters of Amos.

Amos was one of four eighth century prophets. The other three were Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah. Isaiah and Micah prophesied in Judah; Hosea and Amos prophesied in the kingdom of Israel. It was an age in which they prophesied that was much like our own, one of political peace and prosperity and religious activity. Lots of people visited the shrines of Bethel, Dan, and Gilgal with their sacrifices and offerings. It was an age of spiritual and moral decline. It was an age, I said, very much like our own. Material prosperity and spiritual prosperity rarely go together. Religion in Israel was empty. There was a lot of it, a great deal of it, but it was empty.

And the book of Amos begins with God roaring like a lion from Zion against it. He's just as much against it today when churches are full of that kind of religion or worship, shallow, empty worship. So the message of this book is one of judgment, and it's a message that was written millennia ago, but it's one that is relevant today. And as we go through this book, we'll seem to make the connections between the people of God centuries ago and the people of God today.

Well, as I say, the message of this book is one of judgment, and the man that God sent to give it to the northern kingdom was, from his own description, a simple man from the south. He was a shepherd and a fig picker.

That’s how he describes himself in chapter 7:14: “I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs.” He was a simple man armed with the Word of God. Robert Murray M’Cheyne made a great statement. He said – this is in a letter that he wrote to a young man who was going off into the army – M’Cheyne, if you don’t know who he was, was a Scottish Presbyterian minister in the first part of the 1800s. He died at the age of 29, but a man of great spiritual insight. And I don’t have the full quote, but the main point that he makes is – and he was telling this man like a sword that this man would carry as a soldier or a cavalry officer needs to be polished and sharpened. You need to be polished and sharpened spiritually. And he said, “It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.”

Amos was that. He may have been a man of great talents; we don’t know. Reading the book, I think, he probably had great talent. I think he was a smart man – maybe not an Isaiah, who was a very bright, brilliant man. Amos seems to, from his description, have been a simple man, though a man perhaps with talents. But well, we know this, he says he’s not a prophet, and, I think, perhaps he means he didn’t come out of the school of the prophets. He wasn’t trained. He’s a farmer. He’s a herdsman. He’s what perhaps we’d call today a layman. I don’t like that expression. I don’t like clergy/layman that kind of thing. You know what I mean. He wasn’t trained for this ministry to be a prophet, but he certainly was a man of God and a man ready for God’s use and armed with God’s Word, which is a sword. And that made him, to use M’Cheyne’s expression, “an awful weapon” in God’s hand.

Well, much of this is stated in the first two verses where Amos records the time and the subject of his ministry. He was a shepherd from Tekoa, which was a village of Judah about ten miles south of Jerusalem. So he came from kind of a sparse area. If you’ve been to Israel, you’ve seen that part of it. It’s rocky. It’s not – it’s a kind of a barren area. It’s where the patriarchs lived, Abraham and his descendants, Isaac and Jacob. And he was a shepherd there, and he says he was given visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah King of Judah. Uzziah was one of the great kings of Judah, and it was a time of great prosperity in Judah. He also says during the days of Jeroboam,

son of Jehoash, King of Israel. That’s not Jeroboam I; that’s Jeroboam II. This Jeroboam, the northern kingdom prospered. It was its golden age. It was its richest age, a time of peace and strength, and it wasn’t long after that that it was over. So prosperity doesn’t tell you that everything is going to be good in the future. It can end in a moment. But this was the age in which he ministered. It was a time of great prosperity.

So that sets sort of the context generally, but he dates it more precisely, his ministry to the north, as two years before the earthquake. Zechariah, the prophet, mentions this earthquake in Zechariah 14:5 so it was a significant event, maybe something like our 9/11. We look at a lot of things in our very contemporary times – read our recent history by the events of 9/11 of September. That seems to be the sense of that. This earthquake, they all knew what he was talking about. There is archaeological evidence of the earthquake up in Hazor, which is in Galilee kind of a northern part of Galilee. So there’s evidence, archaeologically, a significant earthquake occurring in Israel, and they date it at the time that I’m suggesting he was ministering, which was around 760 B.C. But this reference of the earthquake not only would have pinpointed the date of Amos’s ministry, it also adds something ominous, a kind of ominous mood to the book from the very beginning.

From verse 2, he says that this is about judgment: “The Lord roars from Zion and from Jerusalem He utters His voice; and the shepherds’ pasture grounds mourn, and the summit of Carmel dries up.” You know some of these things that I’m going to tell you, but to give more background for all of this and to understand the setting and the time of it. After Solomon’s death, the kingdom divided under Rehoboam and divided between north and south – two tribes in the south – also the Levites were there and others were there too, but basically it’s Judah, Benjamin, and all the others. The ten tribes were in the north. And the northern tribes worshipped at two sites: Dan in the north and Bethel in the south, which was north of Judah but the southern end of the northern kingdom. That’s where they worshipped, but the Lord doesn’t speak to them from Bethel or from Dan. He speaks from Jerusalem, which is the city of His choice, the city where He said He put His name. That’s where the temple was. That’s where true worship at that time took place, and it’s a

subtle reminder of that. This is a book given to the north. These are sermons, oracles, prophecies given by Amos to the people of the north, and so it begins by this roar is coming out of Jerusalem. That’s where God speaks. He’s not speaking from Bethel. He’s not speaking from Dan because He’s not there. And it’s a way of subtly indicating this northern kingdom, these ten tribes are apostate.

He speaks in a roar. Now that – there’s some disagreement on what that word means. It could be “roar,” or it could be the “clap of thunder,” but either way, it’s either the sound of a violent animal or a gathering storm. As I said, there’s something ominous about it. It signals in the way that the Lord speaks. The tone of His speech signals approaching judgment. But what follows, interestingly, while this is directed to the north, is not judgment on the northern kingdoms. What follows immediately is judgment on the surrounding nations. Amos gives seven prophecies against Israel’s neighbors.

Now he’s going to come to Israel, but first he gives these seven oracles, and it suggests something more about the Lord God, the God of Israel, the God of the church, the God. He is not some local deity, and that’s the way the ancients looked at things. They were polytheists; they believed in many gods. The Moabites had their god. The Ammonites had their gods. The Hittites had their god. Israel has its god. They’re all gods, but they control their little area of turf. You come over to Moab, then you’ve got to deal with Chemosh, or whoever the god of Moab was. What Amos is indicating, and what will follow, is God’s the god of all the nations. He’s not a local deity. He’s not just the god of Israel, the god of Israel and Judah. He is the God of the nations. He’s sovereign over them. He’s Lord of the earth. He is King. He is creator and judge, and He holds all of the nations to account.

Book of Amos reminds us that we live in a moral universe. Wherever you go on this globe, God rules. It’s a moral universe. It’s governed by moral absolutes, and there’s a day of reckoning for the nations and a day or reckoning for individuals. The first of the seven oracles is against Aram, which is Syria. It was Israel’s most frequent and powerful enemy. When I say Israel here, I mean the northern kingdom of Israel.

So in verse 3, we have this first prophecy or first oracle, “Thus says the Lord, ‘For three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because they threshed Gilead with implements of sharp iron.’” So Syria was guilty of a number of sins, and there’s – this is kind of a formula as you read through the first chapter, this is how he addresses all of these different nations. “For three transgressions and for four,” so there are more sins that he’s going to mention here or specify, but there’s a number of sins at all these nations, began with Syria or Aram, are guilty of, but there was one in particular that God identifies, which they committed, and it’s one they committed against the Gileadites.

Gilead was on the east side of the Jordan River where Syria was, just south of Syria. It touched the Syrian border. It was where a large part of the tribe of Manasseh settled. Do you remember when Joshua led them in, three of the tribes settled on the east side of the Jordan River, and the rest settled on the west side? And the Manasseh settled on both sides. So Gilead was a part of the tribe of Manasseh. Then they’re right near Syria right next to it, contiguous with the border of Syria. So it was a disputed area. The Syrians didn’t like them there. But like everybody that’s mentioned here, they’re a conquering people, and so they conquered some portions of it and made war upon them and committed in their act of war an act of terror against these Israelites.

They “threshed” them. A threshing sledge is what’s referred to here, and it’s a sled, wooden sled, with iron spikes or blades, and it would be pulled by an ox over wheat, grain to separate the stalks from the grain. I was in Egypt 30 some years ago, and we’re driving along on this road having seen the tombs or something, and right off to the side were these Egyptian peasants, two of them, a father and a son, I think, and the son was on this threshing sledge. He’s – and it was farming of 3,000 years ago was going on today, and they were threshing the grain. A cow would pull this or an ox would pull this sledge over it with these blades. It would chop up everything so then you could winnow it. You could toss it in the air and separate the chaff from the grain. Well they used this threshing sled to thresh people. They put them under, these Israelites, under these instruments. It’s a horrific thing, but what

you see as you go through this, is men are geniuses at devising cruel ways to treat people. And this act of terror by the men of Damascus is just one example, one of the others that we'll look at. But God sees. God knows, and what He's saying is He's going to deal with this. He's going to deal with these people for doing that and deal with them justly.

Verse 4, “So I will send fire upon the house of Hazael and it will consume the citadels of Ben-hadad.” Fire – probably it's literally referring to that, but fire is another kind of formula for war. You see it repeated fire, burning things. Fire on the city because the enemy has come and has raised the city and torched it. So that's verse 4.

Verse 5, “I will also break the gate bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitants from the valley of Aven, and him who holds the scepter, from Beth-eden; so the people of Aram will go exiled to Kir,” says the Lord.” Hazael and Ben-hadad were Syrian kings. So the nations' government, its kings, would be destroyed. They would've been the ones behind the war, the attack, on Gilead, and this has been a national thing. So the government will fall. The nation would be defeated, and they nation would be deported. It was the Assyrians who did that, who defeated the Syrians and took them off into captivity. But the Lord is the one behind it. He's the one that's doing it. He's the one that's moving the nations as his rod of discipline against this nation. He speaks of Himself as the one who carried out, “I will send fire.” He just used the Assyrians to bring judgment on Aram, or the Syrians.

Now that's providence. That's how God deals with nations and people. He deals with them in providence. Things happen. The Assyrians come against the Syrians, and you don't see God or hear God, but it's all of God. He's moving armies and nations, and that's what we're told. Daniel 2:21 in his prayer about the dreams, he's addressing the Lord God, and he prays his God is the one “who changes the time and the epochs; He removes kings and He establishes kings.”

He does it all, and so while He was going to be removing those kings, over to the west things are going on to where the epoch of Greece begins to rise. Greece had been there, but the new epoch of Greece and Rome further west. It's just this little town on the Tiber – no significance to it, but it's

beginning, and He’s going to build that while these things decrease, and the day’s going to come where the history basically shifts to the west. He’s in control. That’s what’s going on all this time. When Amos is speaking, God is working all over the world to bring about His will. And one of the things He would do as he says here, is “I’m going to bring your nation down.” It’s sinful.

The second oracle is against the Philistines. They lived in five cities on the southern coast of Israel. Just four of them are mentioned here. It’s called the Pentapolis, the five cities, but he mentions Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron. He doesn’t mention Gath. Gath is the city from which Goliath came. The prophecy is directed against Gaza for capturing an entire population and selling it to Edom, enslaving people, men and women. Amos doesn’t say who the captives were, but due to the location of the Philistines and knowing the rivalries they had with Judah, that’s probably who they captured, people from Judah taken in border raids and sold into slavery to Edom, which is located on the east side of the Dead Sea. If you look at your maps in the back, you can see where all these countries are. Edom, Ammon, all of them up to Syria are on the east side of the Jordan and the Dead Sea.

But they practiced slavery, and we see that in more than one case here in the ancient world, and it was for a commercial purpose. Men deprived others of their freedom. They deprived them of their human dignity for profit, for money. God hates that, and in time, He judges those who are guilty of it. We have that here in verse 7 and 8, “So I will send fire upon the walls of Gaza and it will consume her citadels.” Verse 8, “I will also cut off the inhabitants of Ashdod, and him who holds the scepter, from Ashkelon; I will even unleash My power from Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines will perish,” says the Lord God.”

Tyre is next up for judgment. The people of Tyre were the Phoenicians. They were a seafaring people on the southern coast of Lebanon. They had a trading empire across the Mediterranean. They settled Carthage on the northern coast of Africa. They traded as far as Tarshish and may have settled Tarshish in Spain. So they were a great seafaring people. They dominated the Mediterranean and were a wealthy empire. They too were guilty of enslaving

and selling people to Edom, but they were also covenant breakers. And Amos says in verse 9, “They delivered up an entire population to Edom and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.”

Now you go back and study Solomon, he had a covenant with Hiram, King of Tyre probably when he was building the temple and his palace, and he got cedar from Lebanon and had a lucrative arrangement with Tyre. Well probably, this refers to a covenant that Tyre made some centuries later with Israel, but they broke it. They broke the covenant. They broke the agreement and sold people, maybe Israelites, into slavery. Broken treaties, broken contracts, broken promises are not uncommon in the affairs of nations, in business, and with people in general. This problem is a problem today as well as it was then. Nationally, internationally, and personally people do that all the time. They break covenants. They break promises. They break their word. They break marriage contracts. God never breaks His word. We saw that in our first lesson this Sunday in Titus. Paul makes that point at the very beginning about the God who cannot lie. He doesn't break His word. He always keeps His word. He's absolutely reliable, and He punishes those who aren't. And that's what He's punishing here. But He punishes in other ways.

I've been reading through the Proverbs and came on the Proverbs 6:32, “The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; he who would destroy himself does it.” It's a great temptation particularly if it's set before man, but know this, God is saying, “You're going to destroy yourself.” And there's lots of ways in which you can get destroyed, but it will happen. God deals with infidelity, whether it's in a marriage or in a business or in a nation, and that's what He's saying here. Tyre broke their word, and so He says, “I will consume her citadels,” again reference to war. He's going to destroy them by means of another nation.

He would do the same to Edom, the next nation condemned. Edom is the nation of Essau. It was located east of the Jordan River east of the Dead Sea in what is today modern Jordan. The Edomites were also an historic enemy of Israel. They too were guilty of a number of sins and rebellion, but one is singled out, Edom's brutality and war. In verse 11, God says through his prophet, “I will not revoke its punishment, because he pursued his brother

with the sword, while he stifled his compassion; his anger also tore continually, and he maintained his fury forever.” He suppressed his compassion. He let his anger go full throttle, go to speak.

And the brother that He’s speaking of here that he pursued with a sword is probably Israel, and that recalls Genesis 25 where Jacob, whose name was later, you remember, changed to Israel, in the womb, Jacob/Israel struggled with Esau. So from the very beginning, from their conception almost, these two peoples who are brothers struggle with each other. So Israel and Judah were related to Edom; they could be called brothers in that sense, and in some war, the Edomites allowed their anger and their violence against Israel to go unrestrained in their efforts to kill.

So Edom was relentless in its violence; God will be relentless in His judgment and would destroy the towns of Teman in the south and Bozrah in the north. I’m not going to get into this, but that would suggest that there are rules of war that need to be observed. I don’t know enough about war and the military to speak about that. I know Augustine wrote about a just war, and that’s something that’s been debated. Well, it does seem from this, at least, that war is legitimate under the right circumstances, but certain rules of behavior have to be observed. And they didn’t observe them so God would deal with them. They stifled their compassion; they didn’t stifle their violence.

The fifth oracle of judgment was spoken against Ammon. In verses 13-15, Ammon was also related to Israel. The Ammonites were descendants of Lot, and Lot was Abraham’s nephew. Ammon was located on the east side of the Jordan River between Gilead on the north and Moab on the south. The sin of their many sins singled out is violence against pregnant women. And God said, “I will not revoke its punishment, because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to enlarge their borders.” Gilead was not a good place to live. They were getting it from all sides.

Again, no doubt it was a border dispute. They’re in between these two nations, and this one came at them, the Ammonites from the south. The Ammonites were trying to gain more land, and they did that by decimating Gilead’s population killing mothers and unborn children. And so this was not

an uncommon thing in ancient warfare, but there seems to have been some purpose to it, design, other than just being violent and cruel. They were trying to get rid of two generations of people by doing this. So as I said, it was not uncommon in ancient warfare, but it was a hideous crime. It's almost – you don't want to think about it – ripping open pregnant women. This is when God promises again to punish. Verses 14 and 15, “'So I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah and it will consume her citadels amid war cries on the day of battle, and a storm on the day of tempest. Their king will go into exile, he and his princes together.' says the Lord.” Again man's inhumanity to man and all for selfish greed, and God will deal with it. He's the God of Israel. He's the God of Judah, but He deals with all those nations because He rules them too.

The sixth oracle is against Moab. It begins chapter 2. Moab was the brother of Ammon, descendant of Lot again related to Judah and Israel. It was located on the east side of the Dead Sea north of Edom. The crime cited against it was that of desecrating the remains of the king of Edom. This is a kind of interesting sin that God calls out. “Thus says the Lord, ‘For three transgressions of Moab and for four I will not revoke punishment because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.’” It's likely that there was a war between those two nations, and in the course of it, they raided the tomb of a king; they exhumed the skeleton; they burned it into lime, and used it maybe to whitewash houses.

The reason they did this isn't stated, and why this is a terrible sin isn't stated. I speculate that they believe that if they did this to the remains of this king that they would end his existence in the afterlife. So that was what they did. And God promised to punish them for that, which seems maybe a little strange if my interpretation is correct. I have a little support for it that I'll give in a moment, but the act was meaningless. It didn't affect this soul of this king, but I think that the sin was in the motive. They thought that they were doing that, and because that was their motive and that was their intention, God would defeat them or destroy them.

I have been reading *The Last Journals of David Livingstone*, who was in east Africa in the 1870s. It's not very scintillating reading, but he was an

explorer as well as a missionary. He’s basically there as an explorer trying to find trade routes. His goal for himself was to end slavery, and he thought that one of the main ways to end it was to bring economic prosperity to that part of Africa. So here we read about they sold them into slavery. You read that, and you get a sense of what slavery was like and how these Arab slavers – he was on the east side – the slavery that’s connected to our history was on the western side of Africa.

But the Arab slavers would come in, and they would lead off these people, and he’d talk about the songs they would sing, these mournful songs. A lot of them were about the vengeance they were going to bring on their captors, and they’d bring it after they died. And so what they also believed was if their bodies were burned, then their soul wouldn’t be able to go back. They wouldn’t be able to do anything. They would be lost, and so they couldn’t attack their adversaries. And so I suspect there’s something like that in their thinking here that they had this idea that if they destroy the bones of this king, they’d wipe him out for all eternity. He has no eternal resting place or something. As I said, I think that this is my own interpretation, but I think that while that is meaningless and that isn’t what would be the result, that was the intent. And God judges them for that desire to destroy man’s eternal existence. So He says in verse 2, “I will send fire upon Moab and it will consume the citadels of Kerioth; and Moab will die amid tumult. I will also cut off the judge from her midst and slay all her princes with him,” says the Lord.”

Now in verse 4, things change. The seventh oracle is given against Judah, Israel’s brother, and the crime is different. It’s not a crime of violence but a crime of apostasy. In other words, it’s not rebellion against men or violence against men. It’s rebellion against God. Verse 4, “Thus says the Lord, ‘For three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because they rejected the law of the Lord and have not kept His statutes; their lies also have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked.’”

The law, or Torah, that Judah rejected can refer to either the Ten Commandments or the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, or all of

the Old Testament that they had. You can take your pick. I think it would be either the second two – probably the last. It’s probably the whole of scripture, the Old Testament. They basically rejected the Word, and they followed lies. Now some of you have the New International Version. Okay, then you don’t have “lies.” You, if I’m correct, you have, instead of “lies,” “false gods.” That’s not wrong. Their sin, no doubt, involved idolatry, but the phrase in Hebrew is simply “their lies.” And so they’ve interpreted those lies to be lying gods, the gods who are just a lie, but probably it refers to the lies of false prophets they believed and followed into idolatry. So I wouldn’t – both are probably correct, but I think he’s speaking of they followed the lies of false prophets. And they did that because they rejected the Word of God.

When people do that, and that’s a problem today too, and that’s a problem within the church – I mean the Evangelical church. I don’t think there’s a lot of interest in strict Bible study as there should be. But nevertheless, when people do that, and they do that in the sense that these people did, they reject it for the lie, then anything goes. We have no standard. We have no authority or yardstick with which to judge right and wrong, and the result is people slip into error.

You’re all, if you’ve been at Believers Chapel for very long, you’re all familiar with the solas of the Reformation, the five onlys: grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, to God alone be the glory. The first one is *Sola Scriptura*, scripture alone. It is the first among equals. It is the primary doctrine because without it, we’d never know the other four. That’s the reason that the enemy attacks the Word of God. I mentioned this Sunday, I think. The first temptation in Genesis 3, it’s an attack on the Word of God. It undermines the authority of God. That’s what we must guard.

Judah didn’t. Judah was led astray into error. What’s sad about this is their parents led the way. They followed the lies after which their fathers walked. So their parents were bad examples in this, but it recalls to us the responsibility that we have as parents to teach the truth to our children, or some of us to our grandchildren. Set an example. That doesn’t guarantee there’s going to be faithfulness in our children or our grandchildren, but that is our best defense against error and problems, and it’s our responsibility.

It was the responsibility of the fathers in Israel to teach the law to their children, and it is today too. They didn't do that in Judah. They went after the lie. And the children followed, followed the apostasy, and judgment was prophesied, “So I will send fire upon Judah and it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem.” And of course that was fulfilled when Babylon came up against them a century and a half or so later and destroyed the city and the temple.

Disobeying God's Word is as bad as the atrocities committed by the gentiles. Those are heinous crimes, the things that he has described here, the things they did to people – threshing people, killing pregnant women, but I think that what the Lord is saying here is as evil as that is, this is just as evil maybe worse. We don't see it that way, and it isn't to minimize the evil, the cruelty of those gentile sins. It's to show you how bad sin against the Lord God is. Disobeying God's Word is that. The Bible is our guide. The Bible is our defense. The Bible is our weapon against error. We cannot let it go or be indifferent to it. Now that's the sin and the prophecy against Judah.

Now so far – remember he's preaching – Amos is preaching this to the northern kingdom. And so far, they're listening to Amos, and the people of Israel, the northern kingdom, are enjoying his message. He's preaching against their rivals. He's preaching against their enemies, gentiles and Judah as well. But just as he's won their sympathy, he gives an eighth oracle, and it is judgment on them. Someone called this a “rhetoric of entrapment.” So he's sort of drawn them in, and they're really with him and they're in agreement with him and preach it, brother.

And then we read in verse 6, “Thus says the Lord, ‘For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because they sell the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of sandals.’” The people will probably gather there at this holy shrine at Bethel that most think that that's where these sermons were given, these oracles. Chapter 7:10 gives some support to that. And then suddenly, they find themselves the object of his sermon. He's preaching against their sin, and their sin here is a social sin. They've perverted justice.

You see that in a very famous chapter in this book in chapter 5. Injustice is the main sin in that chapter, but that's true here as well. They sold

the righteous for money and cheaply too for a pair of sandals. Corrupt judges took bribes, and they sided with guilty people against the innocent, the righteous, and they did so for monetary gain. There’s a whole list of sins that’s given in the rest of the chapter, but they all had a common theme, and that is oppression, the weak oppressing the poor, the strong grinding down the weak.

In verse 7, they “turn aside the way of the humble.” They take advantage of the poor, “A man and his father resort to the same girl.” Now this is the people of Israel. This is God’s people, and a father and a son are going to a girl for sex. That was the nation. There was no morality in it. There was no morality in the nation; there was no morality in the families. The fathers of Judah were leading their children into apostasy, and the fathers in Israel were leading their sons to the prostitutes, or the girls. I don’t know they may have been innocent girls they were taking advantage of. There’s no morality there. Men in that nation according to this first oracle, first of many, were driven by greed and sex, and both of those are powerful passions that control the nation – control that nation and can control ours as well.

Verse 8, “On garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.” A poor man, I think this is the reference to the garment. It’s taken as a pledge. He says a poor man, if we could reconstruct a kind of scenario that’s behind that, would put up his only possession, his cloak, as a pledge for a loan, and then when he defaulted on a loan, the poor man didn’t have the money to pay to reclaim his cloak. The rich man would be callous toward him and take it. The only thing that would keep this man or this woman warm, and he’d keep it. And that was a violation of the law.

In Deuteronomy 24:17, that’s forbidden to take the cloak of a woman, but I think that would apply to anyone. But they didn’t follow the law. They rejected it just as Judah had done, and so they rejected wisdom. When you do that what follows is the opposite of wisdom, and it’s moral chaos. And the rejection of God’s Word and callousness toward their brothers and sisters were all done in flagrant ingratitude for all that God had done for them.

Remember God had delivered them from slavery. He'd given them the land of milk and honey, and this is really how they responded. And that's what He says in verse 9, "Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, though his height was like the height of cedars and he was strong as oaks; I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below." When there were giants in the land, remember that first generation was terrified – wouldn't go into the land because there were giants in the land.

The second generation goes in and is faithful, relatively faithful. Joshua had to tell them to put away their idols so they still weren't all that faithful, but God got rid of the enemy, this overwhelming enemy. These giants, He defeated them and gave Canaan to them. And they responded by following lies, worshipping idols, oppressing His people in a fevered desire for pleasure and possessions.

But He not only brought them out of slavery in Egypt and into the beautiful land, the land of milk and honey, but He gave them prophets to give them divine revelation, and they rejected them. Verses 11 and 12, "'Then I raised up some of your sons to be the prophets and some of your young men to be Nazirites. Is this not so, O sons of Israel?' declares the Lord. 'But you made the Nazirites drink wine, and you commanded the prophets saying, 'You shall not prophesy!'" The Nazirites were models of dedication to God. Well, prophets were guides of the people to God. The nation rejected both. They made Nazirites, who took a vow to abstain from alcoholic beverages – they made them drink wine or alcoholic drinks, and they shouted down the prophets. They didn't want to hear them. They didn't want to see devotion or hear revelation. The unbelieving world and the worldly minded person doesn't welcome the light of God, and he wants to subdue it any way he can. And he may do that by making the models of righteousness conform to their unrighteousness. Lead them into error, lead them astray, and that's what they did with the Nazirites.

Well, God's response is given in verses 13-16. He describes Himself as weighed down with Israel like a cart and like a cart that's loaded with stuff that creaks and groans along. It's an interesting figure. But I think what He's saying here is He's comparing Himself to that, and He's saying Israel's sin

had made the people a burden to Him, and He was about to end it. He's like a cart that's so weighed down with their sin and their guilt, He can barely move. This cart is just creaking along so He's about to end that and unload them, and He'd do that in judgment. “There would be fire,” he says, “War, and no one would survive.” No one, in verses 14 and 15, would be strong enough to resist the judgment or fast enough to flee it. The one who destroyed the great Amorites, those giants, would destroy these ungrateful Israelites.

And then the chapter concludes in verse 16, “’Even the bravest among the warriors will flee naked in that day,’ declares the Lord.” God is patient. That's one of the virtues of the Lord that these oracles teach. “For three transgressions and for four” is repeated. It shows that God's long suffering of many sins. He's been patient with, but His patience ends. He's also just. The nations rise and fall according to God's moral judgment. That's true of all nations. That's true of nations today. It's true of our own country; we're no exception. But this has application also to the church, and I think that's really where we see the main application. Ingratitude towards God's grace and indifference toward His Word, toward the Scriptures, has terrible consequences. It leads to worldliness. It leads to error, and ultimately, it leads to apostasy, which God disciplines. So we need to be aware of that.

I'll end with Proverbs 1:30-31, which gives a message for every generation, for every individual in the world, wisdom says, “They would not accept my counsel, so they will eat the fruit of their own way.” There are absolutes in this world – absolute – moral absolutes, and you cannot violate them without eating the fruit of it. And if we ignore the Word of God, the fruit will be bitter. May God preserve us from that. Well, I've gone a little long. Why don't we end with a brief word of prayer, and then I'll turn it over to **Jim**.

[Prayer] Father, thank you for this time together. We thank you for your Word, and we pray that you bless these things to our understanding. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.