

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Amos 2:4-16

English Standard Version

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, June 7, 2015

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The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, June 7, 2015**, is from **Amos 2:4-16**. Please Note: Some churches will only study **Amos 2:4-8**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. A podcast for this commentary is also available at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Amos 2:4-16

(Amos 2:4) Thus says the LORD: “For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have rejected the law of the LORD, and have not kept his statutes, but their lies have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked.

Amos, a shepherd from Tekoa (a village south of Jerusalem in Judah) and a nonprofessional prophet, preached in the Kingdom of Israel about 750 BC. He first preached God’s judgment on the nations that surrounded the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and then he declared God’s judgment on them. God patiently waited for His people to repent, but He eventually declared He would not revoke His punishment after the symbolic “four transgressions.” God had waited patiently through the symbolic first three transgressions, but eventually God’s patience would cease to be a virtue and just judgment was necessary on Judah and Israel.

(Amos 2:5) So I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem.”

The “fire” is God’s just judgment. Later, another prophet, John the Baptist, preached, “Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I baptize you with water for repentance,

but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:10-11). Cities and strongholds were often burned with fire after they were captured and looted. Judah was in the early stages of rebellion against God, as described in verses four and five. First, they rejected the moral law of God (written in summary form as the 10 Commandments) and they worshiped idols. Second, they rejected good government and laws based on the moral law of God with God as King. Third, they believed and followed the lies of the false religions and idols of the pagans around them. The first decline away from God and His law led them into a second and third decline even further from God and righteousness.

(Amos 2:6) Thus says the LORD: “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals—

The Kingdom of Israel had turned from the true God and true worship when the 10 northern tribes separated from the two southern tribes after the death of King Solomon. Amos described in detail what their apostasy had led the leaders and the people to do, but these are only a few examples of their sins. Their idols promised to fulfill their lusts for money, power, and sexual perversion, which led them to abuse the righteous and sell them into slavery for silver or land. Sandals were sometimes used to complete the purchase of land (see Ruth 4:7-8). Or, some righteous people were sold as cheaply as the cost of a pair of sandals. The righteous became poor because they would not practice the immoral ways of those around them in the kingdom.

(Amos 2:7) those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted; a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned;

Jesus said that we will always have poor people in the world, and the laws of God in both the Old Testament and the New Testament require God’s people to care for the poor (Mark 14:7). When a nation turns from God, the powerful people who have turned from God will oppress, lie, cheat, and steal from the less powerful and the righteous people who follow the laws of God. Those who have turned from God will invent and promote immoral practices and fulfill all of their lusts until God’s judgment comes upon them.

(Amos 2:8) they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.”

Poor people sometimes had to give their garments as a pledge that they would repay a loan: this was according to Old Testament law to protect them, because the lender was required to return their garments at night so they would not be cold when they slept. Rather than dirty their own fine clothes, the wealthy lender would lie on the garments

given as a pledge as they acted immorally at the altars and temples of their idols. They also found ways to impose fines on the less powerful, the poor, and the righteous, then they used the money to drink wine (presumably to get drunk using the money they had stolen rather than their own money).

(Amos 2:9) “Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars and who was as strong as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath.

By promising to judge the nations around Judah and Israel, and by reminding Israel that He had destroyed the Amorites when their cup of iniquity was full (Genesis 15:16), God declared once again that He was the supreme King over all the nations on earth and He held every nation morally accountable. The nations around Judah and Israel had turned to violence, war, and atrocities against their neighbors (a further decline after having turned to believing and following the lies of their idols). God destroyed the Amorites completely even though many were giants, as was Goliath, and He declared that He would destroy the Kingdom of Israel completely (which God did in 722 BC).

(Amos 2:10) Also it was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.

In order for God to give the Promised Land to the 12 tribes of Israel, He had to free them from slavery in Egypt and care for the Israelites during 40 years of wilderness wanderings. As the Lord over all, God was perfectly capable of doing what He said. To destroy the Kingdom of Israel, He would use a foreign army, Assyria, but the judgment and punishment was from Him. Later, God sent the Kingdom of Judah into exile in Babylon, in 586 BC, as punishment for their sins, just as He promised.

(Amos 2:11) And I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?” declares the LORD.

God raised up Elijah as a prophet among others in Israel. God raised up Samson and Samuel as judges and Nazirites to demonstrate a life wholly consecrated to our holy God (though Samson failed and eventually repented). God raised up prophets and Nazirites to teach His word and to call His people back to loyalty and obedience to God and His law.

(Amos 2:12) “But you made the Nazirites drink wine, and commanded the prophets, saying, ‘You shall not prophesy.’

In response to God and the gifts He sent His people to help them live justly, righteously, and obediently to God, the Israelites persecuted the Nazirites by making them drink wine when God intended for them to be filled with His Spirit (see Ephesians 5:18). They

silenced the prophets and forbid them to preach God's word, refusing to listen to the Word of God. Therefore, God sent them Amos, who came from the southern kingdom, to warn them once again. However, the nation and its leaders would not repent and the Kingdom of Israel had to be destroyed as God's just punishment.

(Amos 2:13) “Behold, I will press you down in your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses down.

Amos preached two years before a memorable earthquake in the Kingdom of Israel (Amos 1:1). God used earthquakes and their enemies to flatten Samaria and the Kingdom of Israel as flat as a cart wheel on a heavily loaded cart flattened the ground in a rut in a road or field.

(Amos 2:14) Flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not retain his strength, nor shall the mighty save his life;

God declared through Amos that when His judgment came (and the earthquake two years after Amos preached was a forewarning of the truth Amos preached), people could not run fast enough to escape it. In addition, the strong would not be strong enough to defend themselves, and the mighty warriors would not be strong enough to save the Kingdom of Israel, Samaria, or their own lives.

(Amos 2:15) he who handles the bow shall not stand, and he who is swift of foot shall not save himself, nor shall he who rides the horse save his life;

The rich and powerful depended on themselves, their power, their wealth, and their army to keep them safe from destruction. Believing pagan lies, they had turned from God to self-centeredness and self-sufficiency, which would fail them. Refusing to repent, they would lose all they had, including their lives. God waited patiently for them to repent even after they had silenced their prophets. God waited patiently for them to repent after they heard Amos preach the Word of God, but they refused to repent. They went from bad to worse – afflicting the poor and the righteous – until God brought the justice to the poor and the righteous that they deserved after all of their afflictions.

(Amos 2:16) and he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day,” declares the LORD.

The most brave would be so terrified on the day the LORD brought just punishment upon the Kingdom of Israel, upon those who had ceased to acknowledge the LORD as the God of justice and loving-kindness, that they would lose all of their possessions before they were caught by their enemies and punished by death or exile. What Amos foretold, God did, and the 10 tribes that made up the Kingdom of Israel have disappeared as a people group or tribes, and their descendants remain scattered, unless some have returned to live in the new nation of Israel, which was created in 1948.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. How do you think the Israelites felt when they heard Amos foretelling their neighbors, who were their enemies, would be punished by God?
2. What did God say the Kingdom of Judah had done, and what was the result of their choices that led to God's judgment?
3. What did God mean when He said, "I will not revoke the punishment"?
4. Was anyone righteous in the Kingdom of Israel? Give a reason for your answer.
5. How did God expect the poor to be protected and have their needs met?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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