

Intro: In the first two chapters we saw Amos employ a powerful and artful tactic to set up the truth that God's people had forgotten Him, had become like the nations around them, and had ceased to seek Him. It is also true that God saw this betrayal as the greatest sin of those listed among their surround neighbors, and so judgment would fall. Sometimes, the Israelites rejected the prophets, and even Jesus in like manner, by claiming a promise that they were God's people, so God wouldn't bring judgment upon us. Yet, here we see that when God's people turn away from Him to seek their sustenance and blessing in something else, that God brings judgment.

I can't help but wonder if the future of our nation lies in direct tide with this truth. Not that America as a nation was ever 'God's people', but rather that we, as a corporate people, are due the disastrous judgment of God for our national sins of idolatry of wealth, sex, and power. With the Standard and Poor's recent downgrade of U.S. credit, the first in its history, Amos' words ring even more powerful in my own ears. So, let us hear and heed the word of the LORD given to Amos, the shepherd prophet.

1) The LORD is the Lord Over All

- a) Amos argues cause and effect (3-6)
- b) POINT: If disaster befalls a city = the LORD brought it
 - i) When it comes to disaster, the primary power and authority lies with God.
 - (1) God is not the initiator or perpetrator of sin, but He has authority over Satan and his desire for destruction
 - (2) Scripture does not ever speak of God sinning or being held responsible for sin
 - (3) Difficult, admittedly, but we must submit to what Scripture actually reveals and leave the unrevealed things to God ("for who are you, o Man, to argue against God?" Romans 9:20)
 - ii) Sometimes we try and blame Satan alone (he is blameworthy, and held responsible by God for his desire to steal, kill, and destroy), but we must recognize that the Scriptures never reveal Satan working without the direct authority of God (their intentions are completely different, of course)
 - (1) See Job – Satan has to ask permission to touch Job's life with disaster (and actually God brings the subject up)
 - (2) Luke 22:31-32 – Satan has to "obtain by asking" in order to sift Peter like wheat
 - (a) Note also in this example that Jesus does not pray that Satan would not be allowed, but only that Peter's faith would stand firm
 - (3) Matt 4 – the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness *in order to be tempted by Satan*
 - (4) Isaiah 45:7 – I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create disaster, I am the LORD, who does all these things.
 - iii) The fact that God is sovereign should give us great hope and joy because God is good, unlike Satan.
- c) It is also extremely important at this point, when speaking of God's sovereignty in disaster, that we recognize the revealed heart of God in these matters.
 - i) God is not a petulant toddler who just gets angry when He doesn't get His own way. This is NOT the picture of God's just discipline in the Scriptures, particularly toward His people "whom He knew" and "whom He chose".
 - ii) The disaster brought by God is the disaster of a loving Father who brings discipline and consequence with the intention of turning His beloved children away from the most dangerous things, the terrible things, and into the joy and delight of knowing Him, worshiping Him, the abundant life of God in a relationship of love between creature and Creator, that which we have been created to enjoy.
 - iii) Because of the Father's heart of love toward us, He warns us of the impending consequences of pursuing dangerous things (in this case, social injustice, wealth and luxury as saviors, a particular ignorance and resistance to the afflicted in need, and primarily a functional ignorance of Him).

- (1) Is it not the same with us as parents, bringing “disaster” in proportion to the danger of disobedience, particularly that which destroys relationship between us?
- (2) Even more so, with God, in proportion to the danger is the disaster that befalls: idolatry belittles God the infinitely beautiful, perfect, purity above all else.
 - (a) Just as a gun fired against a citizen brings grave consequences (attempted murder), but a gun fired against the President brings graver consequences (treason – death)

2) The LORD Warns Us to Turn Away from Worthless Idols and Trust in Him

- a) “The LORD reveals all to His prophets”
 - i) Really? Everything? – context is disaster and judgment for particular sin
 - ii) This line shows us that God desires to reveal His plan ahead of time *so that His people would turn away from their idolatrous and ungodly sin and seek Him and live!!*
 - (1) Amos 5:4 – “Seek Me and live!”
 - (2) Amos 5:6 – “Seek the LORD and live!”
 - (3) Amos 5:14 – “Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said.”
 - iii) It is also important to note that God’s sending of disaster because of the nation’s sin is a corporate judgment for a corporate sin.
 - (1) In other words, the ones treated unjustly, the poor and oppressed are not the ones whose sin bring this judgment
 - (2) When God brings disaster, it may not be to a particular sin of you as an individual, but as a corporate judgment to bring an entire nation, church, family, etc. back to trusting in Him
- b) The fact that God warns His people is indicative that His judgment is not arbitrary, or merely punitive, but is rather restorative and from the heart of a Father.
- c) Without this statement (v7-8) we would assume that the prophetic word of Amos is merely informative and that disaster is coming...too bad.
 - i) But the warning is intended to bring about change, repentance, a moving away from trusting in wealth and luxury, a return to caring for the poor with compassion and generosity
 - ii) The Law of God reveals the heart of a Father who knows for what we were made (to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever)
 - (1) Without this indication of God’s heart, the Law seems to us to be some arbitrary test of our knowledge, strength, will, etc. rather than the ways of wisdom and righteousness from the good heart of a loving Father who knows what is best for us
- d) The LORD is a Lion, Not a Patsy
 - i) The Lion has roared...will we heed the warning!
 - (1) Remember Hosea’s words of the moth and the lion?
 - (2) God comes first to correct us like a moth, gently but with some destruction and severity
 - (3) If we do not heed the gentle reproof, He comes like a lion to destroy and devour
 - ii) He is not shackled from the true plans of His heart
 - (1) **Deuteronomy 32:39** “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.
 - (2) **Isaiah 14:27** For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?
 - iii) He is a loosed lion, prepared to pounce if His people will not heed His call to turn back to Him.
 - (1) Hebrews 10:31 – “it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

3) The Lion Prepares to Pounce Because of the Sin of Oppressive Greed (9-10)

- a) Greed is idolatry of wealth (Colossians 3:5)
 - i) Wealth promises security when only God gives us ultimate security
 - ii) Wealth promises joy when only God gives us true joy

- iii) Wealth promises rest/comfort when only God gives us true rest and comfort
- iv) So, we see that wealth can be a false God that tries to imitate the promises of God while all the while enslaving us to greater and greater sin (oppression, brutality, unkindness, selfishness, violence, etc.)
 - (1) The amount of their wealth wasn't the issue, it was how they obtained it (unjustly, unfairly) and what they did with it (lots of eating, *demanding* more, like a leech)
- b) God calls this greed "oppressions within her midst" – turmoil of self-centeredness
 - i) "not knowing what is right"
 - (1) This shows us what is "right" in the eyes of God:
 - (2) Compassion toward the weak, kindness rather than *violence*, justice rather than *robbery*, humble trust rather than arrogance in *one's own strength*
 - (3) Micah 6:8 – "What does the LORD require of you but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God?"
 - ii) This desire and pursuing passion for wealth and luxury (silk beds, couches, ivory homes) at the ignorance of the weak show the nature of Israel's idolatry: they are not loving God nor loving neighbor
- c) If they do not heed the warning, then God will bring the enemy to destroy and plunder their strength and their wealth
 - i) There will be nothing left, like when lion seizes a lamb
 - ii) They will be taken right from the center of the strength that they place their trust
 - (1) Their wealth will not save them, for the enemy will devour them right off their resting places, right out of their bedroom and take a piece of their luxuries with them. So, in fact their trust in their comfort, strength, and wealth is actually destroying them spiritually. They have spiraled down to idolatry through their success.
 - (2) The summer and winter houses (affluence) will perish, the large houses and the ivory inlaid houses will all be destroyed.
 - iii) They will be taken with:
 - (1) The silk of their lounging couch (difficult word, "silk", to translate)
 - (2) The corner of their bed
 - (3) The picture here is of Israel lounging around in wealth and comfort, becoming lazy and self-righteous when their wealth was built upon the poor through robbery (unjust business practices), violence, and cruelty
 - iv) Israel trusted so much in their success, their wealth, the work of their hands, that they rejected the Lord's call to righteousness and delight in Him and instead sought every means to further their wealth and their comfort and their luxury...at the expense of the weak, the poor, the afflicted
 - (1) Archaeologists have found 8th century BC houses in the Samaria area that were inlaid with ivory.
 - (2) These houses made up a quarter of the city while there was also a quarter of smaller dwellings, which was a departure from Israelite cities prior to that time where all the houses were of similar size (except the kings).
 - (3) So we see a division of wealth (in itself not a bad thing), but at the expense of the poor, the afflicted, and the weak (see the rest of Amos for more detail ☺) (4:1; 5:11-12; 6:4-6)
- d) God would judge their empty religion as well (more next week)
 - i) There is also specific judgment listed on the religious practices, the altars of Bethel, where there were places set up to worship YHWH
 - ii) God judges His own temples because the people's hearts were far from Him. This shows again that it is not what is made with hands that house the LORD, but rather that He desires to dwell with His people in purity and in righteousness.

- iii) The LORD is not merely jealous like an untrusting lover, but rather a protecting Husband who knows the destruction and devastation of our adulterous affair with the idols of wealth and of luxury.
- iv) God is the One who made us and He knows best how we are to live life to the utmost: in dependence upon Him, worshipping Him with great joy, for it is in His presence that the fullness of delight flows forth. Just as Adam walked in the garden with God, so are we created to walk with God

4) So, What About Us?

- a) Treasure the LORD more than anything else, and trust in Him to save you in any trouble:
 - i) **The goal is not merely philanthropy or biblical social justice, but rather the “why” behind those actions: “Seek HIM and live!” – “Seek good...and the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you”**
 - ii) We cannot serve two masters: if we love wealth, we hate God (Matt 6:24)
 - iii) Recognize that wealth, commodities, stuff, are really making promises to you that are god-like (security, salvation, peace, rest, comfort, etc.) and can never ultimately save you and you can lose it (unlike Christ)
 - (1) There’s always a bigger house, a nicer car, better healthcare: the slippery slope of greed enslaves us these things and makes us self-centered workaholics and bitter fearful worriers
 - iv) You have a Father who loves you enough to bring disaster to get your hands off of that which will destroy and enslave you: when disaster falls, know that your Father is for you and is telling you something
 - v) You have a Father who will not negotiate His justice to the point that He sent His Only Son to satisfy His justice and bring you salvation
- b) MEDITATE ON THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST as the means to see this world rightly
 - i) This is the heart of Christian Growth and that which pleases the LORD: Humbly Seek Him as He is until your affections are so overwhelmed by His beauty that they supersede all other affections
 - ii) We are to love God in Christ and love our neighbors as ourselves because:
 - (1) In Christ, we have been given all the spiritual blessings of God (Ephesians 1:3)
 - (2) In Christ, we have been given freedom and life for free, so we can give freely (Matt 10:8)
 - (3) We have been given the Spirit of God to know what we truly have in Christ (1 Cor 2:12)
 - (4) We have security, comfort, rest, and joy in Christ the High King over all things.
 - (a) Hebrews 13:5-6 – Because God never leaves us nor forsakes us, we are to be free from the love of money, if God is for us, what do we have to fear?
 - iii) Therefore, we are to treat the those weaker than us (socially, physically, economically) with compassion, just as God has treated us in Christ, as we cling to Christ even in the midst of disaster