

## Ray Charlton - Amos

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It's interesting that the. What started out as an idea of the possibility of a theme for the convention ended up being that many of us had already decided that we were going to speak on the minor prophets, and in my case, I took the prophet Amos, and when we look at it, we have the fact that all scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work, and that's second Timothy 3, 16, 17.

We go from there. We see that it was a custom of the Jews that. That every Sabbath at the synagogue, a portion of the law and then the prophets was read, followed by the words of exhortation, and we read These in the first of all, in Acts 13 and 15, after the reading of the law and the prophets, the synagogues officials sent them, saying, brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, please say it, and we then came up in Acts 15 and 21.

For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath. The Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament were divided into five books of the law, 12 books on the history of the Jews, five books on poetry, and the books of the prophets were divided into five major works and 12 minor books. The term major and minor prophets just differentiates the longer books, which had a broad content, and the minor prophets, which are usually shorter, and the content is more narrowly focused.

They were, we cannot say that they were less inspired than the major prophets. Jehovah revealed more things through the major prophets, but the minor ones were just as inspired, and it's interesting that the Messiah's birth is foretold in both Isaiah and Micah, his atoning sacrifices in Isaiah, his return in Ezekiel, Daniel and Zachariah. All the prophets draw attention to God's holiness, wrath, grace and mercy, making all of them worthy of our study. Many of the minor prophets give us an insight to the end times in which we are living, the end of the Gospel age.

My focus is on the Book of Amos, and it's just interesting that my Bible has in it that it's famine for the word of God. But who is Amos? We are told that the words. We're told the words of Amos, who were among the sheep herders from Tycho, which he envisaged in visions concerning Israel in the days of the Isaiah, king of Judah, in the days of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake in Amos 1 and 1 Tycho was just a small town approximately 16 kilometers south of Jerusalem.

The time setting is interesting as his vision concerns Israel. Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam king of Israel. It further states that it was two years before the earthquake. This appears to be the same earthquake mentioned in Zachariah. You will flee from the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains which reach to a zeal.

And yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him in Zechariah 14 and 5. The timing of this earthquake does not seem to be recorded in Scripture or in secular history, but the name of the kings shows us that they had a period of 15 years where their reigns overlapped, and that was from 767 BC to 753 BC Amos preached at about the same time that Hosea was preaching in the Kingdom of Israel. The mention of the earthquake is interesting as it is often figuratively. As a token of the presence of Jehovah, David records, in my distress I called upon the Lord.

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Yes, I called to my God, and from his temple he heard my voice, and my cry for help came to his ears. Then the earth shook and quaked, and the foundations of the heaven were trembled and was shaken because he was angry. It is also clear that Amos did not come from a family of prophets, nor did he even consider himself one. Rather, he was a grower of sycamore figs, as well as a shepherd. Then Amos replied to Amazar, I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet.

I'm a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs. But Jehovah took me from the following the flocks and said to me, go prophesy to my people Israel. In Amos 7:14 15. His simple station of life meant that he understood the plight of the oppressed and voiceless and spoke at their level. Though Amos came from the southern kingdom of Judah, he delivered his prophecy against the northern kingdom of Israel and the surrounding nations, leading to some resistance from the prideful Israelites.

Jeroboam's reign saw the greatest success and outward prosperity for the northern kingdom since the days of Solomon. However, the moral decay counteracted any positiveness from the material growth. The message brought by Amos was really Jehovah's judgment on the cities surrounding Palestine, and in Amos chapters one and two we find that each judgment is prefaced with thus saith The Lord for three transgressions and for four I will not revoke its punishment. The phrase is not to be taken literally but idiomatically, meaning that the measure was full and more than full. The sins of the people had tipped the scale and required punishment.

The cities included Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, the sons of Ammonia and Moab. If you have time, read the chapters and note the sins of the Gentile nations. It is interesting that after prophesying to the demise of these nations, but Jehovah now turns close to home, bringing the same judgment on Judah and Israel to the Jews. Hearing the proclamation from Amos, this would have been an extremely, extremely degrading to them. God pointed out with this statement that by their sins Judah and Israel had forfeited the special recognition By Jehovah, Judah had despised the law, while Israel opposed the righteous and the poor.

God's word through Amos was mainly directed against the privileged people of Israel, a people who had no love for their neighbor, who took advantage of others, and who could only look out for their own concerns. Jehovah reminded the people through Amos, it was I who brought you from the land of Egypt, and I will lead you and I led you in the wilderness 40 years that you might take possession of the land of the amorites. In Amos 2 and 10 he reminded them that he had raised up prophets and Nazirites to guide the people. However, they silenced the prophets and made the Nazirites to drink wine. For these and other sins, God spoke against the whole family which he had brought up from Egypt, saying, sorry, you only have I chosen from all the families of the earth.

Therefore I will punish you for all of your iniquities. Israel's Iniquities the Book of Amos holds God's people accountable for their ill treatment of others. It repeatedly points out the failure of the people to embrace God's idea of justice, and we read, thus saith Jehovah, for three transgressions of Israel, yay for four. I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they have sold the righteousness for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes.

They that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn again aside the way of the meek, and a man and his father goes under the same maiden to profane my holy name. Amos 2, 6 and 7. They were intoxicated with their own economic success and financial position. The people had lost the concept of caring for one another.

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Amos rebuked them because he saw that Israel had forgotten God. However, we remember that God had created man to flourish, to fill the earth, to have dominion over the animals, as we heard yesterday, to tend to the plants that after Adam sinned, things changed, and we read because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree which I commanded you, saying you shall not eat from it. Cursed is the ground because of you in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life, both thorns and thistles. It shall grow for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your face you will eat bread till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you will return. Even with these harsh conditions, God allowed mankind to flourish in material things. But those that prosper were supposed to extend mercy, compassion, generosity to those in need. Isaiah reminded the people, learn to do good, seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Amos was so fed up with the attitude of the people that this is not till the end of the Book that he gives them any hope for a brighter time.

We then go on to Israel's misuse of prosperity. Solomon spoke of material prosperity as a gift from God. It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, and he adds no sorrow to it. He continues to compare the ways wealthy can be quite often affects the outcome and we read the plan of the diligent leads surely to the advantage, but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty. The acquisition of treasure by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death.

In Proverbs 21:5 to 6 he also speaks of how the less advantaged have to be treated when he said, let your mouth be open for those who have no voice in the cause of those who are ready for death. Let your mouth be open, judge rightly, and give right decisions in the cause of the poor and those in need. Israel and Judah during the 8th century BC God's chosen people were prosperous as a nation. They had forgotten why they were so blessed. Yet, as was so often the case came down through Israel's history, they failed to love one another as they had been called to do.

Jehovah told Amos, for I know your transgressions are many, and your sins are great for you for sorry you who distress the righteous and accept bribes, and turn aside the poor in the gate, and again he goes on to say, hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end. Those with plenty were taking the land from the poor to further enriched themselves. However with the Israelite kingdom, their riches had drawn them away from God. He warned them that a day of reckoning was coming.

They were claiming that they were still worshipping him, but their deeds proved otherwise, and so he stated, I hate I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them. I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Because of their lack of mercy, Jehovah made the decision to exile his people, bringing a day of judgment, the day of the Lord, which the prophet Amos describes of a day of climatic judgment.

Amos describes that day saying, it is darkness and not light. Is not the day of the Lord darkness and not light and gloom with no brightness in it? The Israelites are reminded of God's power to control the light and the darkness, and goes on to read, and he who made the Pleiades and Orion, and changed deep darkness into mourning, who also darkens day into night, who calls from the waters of the earth, and so pours them out on the surface of the earth, Jehovah is his name. God reminded them of their behavior towards him in Amos 5:25,27. It is interesting that this part of Amos is quoted in Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin.

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Their fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him even in the wilderness. At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heavens, as it is written in the book of the Prophets. It was not to me that you offered victims and sacrifices 40 years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel? You also took along the temple of Moloch and the stars of the God Rapha, the images which you made to worship, I also will remove you beyond Babylon, and that's in Acts 7:41,43.

But hope for the House of Jacob in chapter nine, Amos finally there is a glimmer of hope with the statement, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob. However, they would first be punished. Behold, I am commanding, and I will shake the house of Israel amongst all nations. As grain is shaken in a sieve, but not a kernel will fall to the ground. The prophet Hosea helps with the understanding of this verse when he writes, my God will cast them away because they did not listen to him and obey him, and they will be wanderers and fugitives amongst the nations.

We could have said that all would be lost and yet we come now to the beautiful verses on the restoration of Israel. The final word of Amos brought great hope for Israel to return with Jehovah's promise. In that day I will raise up the fallen both of David and walls in its breaches, and I will raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old. They that may possess the remnant of Eden and all the nations who are called by my name, declares the Lord.

Who does this? Behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when the ploughman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes, him who sows seed, when the mountains will drip with sweet wine and all the mountains will be dissolved. Also I will restore the captivity of my people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine and make gardens and eat fruit.

I will also plant them in the land and then this beautiful promise, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them, says the Lord your God. But what's the relevance of Amos message to the Church today? It's interesting that today has very similar conditions to what was confronting Amos. The world today has many prosperous nations who often neglect the poor countries and as well as the poor amongst them.

Just as in the days of Amos, many of the wealthy who have more than they can ever spend still want more, resulting in the poor having less. Some of the top CEOs of the companies earn more in a day than many of their workers earn in a year, and we've got two charts there showing the pay increases 2009 to 2018 for the different groups. But then the average of the CEO's wages to the average worker and some of those figures are absolutely frightening. Going on more to the relevance for today, there is that message to the Church.

Today the Church is also not exempt from this situation, and yesterday we looked at the message to the church of Lodiusea and it gives the following warning. I know your deeds that you are neither hot or cold or hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth because you say I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing.

And you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. Let us have a look at God's impartial justice. The Heavenly Father does not overlook injustice that are carried out by his chosen people. Our relationship with him and our Master Christ should lead us to strive for justice and righteousness in our lives, and in our relationship not only with other brethren,

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but also, where possible, with all mankind. The apostle John reminds us, we know love by this, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word and with tongue, but in deed and in truth. The apostle James then goes on and says, if a brother or a sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of them says to them, go in peace, be warmed and be filled and yet you have not given them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? We now go on to the dangers of wealth. In the eighth chapter of Amos it becomes apparent that the people of Israel had become greedy.

They could not wait for the holy festivals to finish so that they could sell more grain, or to shorten the sabbath day so that they could open their stores. They cheated with dishonest scales and took more money in payment than what was due. This too can lead to the consecrated believer going astray, and Paul writing to Timothy, reminds us, well, we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

But those who want to get rich into temptation, and fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge man into ruin and destruction, for the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil, and so I'm by longing for it, have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with grief. We are to be grateful for what we have received from our Heavenly Father, but the bounty must never displace him as the center of our affections, and we are reminded, therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ walked in, loved us, and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Just a note of interest that some of statements in Amos chapter eight are worthy of consideration.

And we read that Jehovah swore by himself, saying, surely I will never forget all their rebellious deeds. Shall not the land tremble on this account, and it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord Jehovah, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day. Without doubt, all these events took place either during Amos's time or shortly after. However, there appears to be a Second Fulfillment at Christ's first advent Seven centuries after Amos prophecy, we read when the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. This was certainly a miracle because it should have been the sunniest part of the day.

And eclipses, as we know, only last for a very short time. This was at the time of our Lord's death. His resurrection was also foretold, and behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord had descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. So we do have that beautiful picture of that what Amos said came to fruition during our Lord's advent.

Then we have in Revelations 21:1, then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth have passed away and there was no more sea. We've got this promise that there will be a time when the restlessness of the nations that we see around all of the countries at this time, around the world are experiencing anarchy, experiencing rioting. We have all of the people coming out with weird and strange beliefs that are causing more problems on the earth, which is very difficult, especially during this time of COVID But we have the promise then that and I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband, and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, behold, the tabernacle of God is amongst men, and he will dwell amongst them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be amongst them, and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

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And there will be no longer any more be any death. There will no longer be any mourning or crying or pain. The first things have passed away. But here we have that beautiful picture that this is what the Heavenly Father had wanted for his children all the time from putting Adam into the garden was the fact that he wanted to have them as his children. But because of disobedience, they became estranged from the Heavenly Father and the difficulties that came.

But all the time through, he had a plan that we saw happen at the first advent, the death of Christ and His resurrection, and then the opportunity that we have during this gospel age to come into a relationship with the Heavenly Father, to be considered his children, to be considered brethren of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, and then we come to that beautiful prayer that we were taught when we look forward to the kingdom that we pray for. It was one that our Lord instructed us to pray to His Father and to our Father, saying that your kingdom will come, your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and we can see that this was the message that Amos had tried to bring to those rebellious stiff neck people.

And we ask, may God add his blessing.