

# The Lion Roars From Zion

## Amos 1

Today we start our journey through the book of Amos. I think your going to be surprised at some of the things we are going to find here.

Let's start with a little bit of history about Amos. The name Amos means burden bearer. He was from a small town named Tekoa, which was about 10 miles from Jerusalem. He earned a living by tending flocks and working in the fig groves. We don't know if he owned the flocks or groves or if he was a hired hand. However, we do know that he was a skillful word smith and had a vast knowledge of history.

This would lead us to believe that he was an educated man and not an ordinary peasant. We know that God sent Joel to Judah to prophecy about God judgment but Amos was sent to Israel. So because of this it is believed that most of his ministry was centered around Bethel since that was the main religious sanctuary for Israel. We believe that his ministry was from about 760-750 B.C. and centered highly on social justice.

You know many times we start off by saying a prayer. We are not going to do that today. Instead, I want to read from a prayer that was given by Pastor Joe Wright before the Kansas state senate on January 23, 1996. When they asked him to do the prayer it was suggested that in such circumstances that clergymen should follow the "Guidelines for Civic Occasions", written by the National Conference of Christians and Jews which calls for the use of universal terms for the deity and for the recognition of the pluralism of American society. Here is the prayer ...

Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and seek your direction and guidance. We know your Word says, "Woe on those who call evil good" but that's exactly what we've done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and inverted our values. We confess that:

We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it moral pluralism;

We have worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism;

We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle;

We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery;

We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation;

We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare;

We have killed our unborn and called it choice;

We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable;

We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building esteem;

We have abused power and called it political savvy;

We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition;

We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression;

We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; try us and see if there be some wicked way in us; cleanse us from every sin and set us free... I ask it in the name of your son, the living savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

How do those words strike you? Do they reflect what you've seen of the world, or what you're read in the papers, or seen on TV? Do they reflect you in any way? Perhaps you think they reflect only a part of life - that they describe the exception, rather than the rule.

Well, this is nothing new. The words of this prayer echoes the words of Amos to the nation of Israel.

Let's get started....

*1 The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa—the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash<sup>[a]</sup> was king of Israel. 2 He said: “The LORD roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up, and the top of Carmel withers.”*

These scriptures start off by telling us a little bit about Amos but I think the most important thing is how God used him. Just like Joel he brought the message of judgement of the Lord.

Israel, being in direct disobedience to God, had established rival centers of worship in Dan, Bethel, and Gilgal. When Amos said that the LORD roars from Zion, which is heaven, and thunders from Jerusalem, he reminded all of Israel where the center of true worship was and is to be.

Then he goes into the fact that he knows how the judgment of God could affect the land. If God withheld rain, sent plagues, or allowed conquering armies to come upon the land, it made the pastures of the shepherds dry up and the animals die. Sound familiar?

*3 This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not relent. Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth, 4 I will send fire on the house of Hazael that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad. 5 I will break down the gate of Damascus; I will destroy the king who is in<sup>[b]</sup> the Valley of Aven<sup>[c]</sup> and the one who holds the scepter in Beth Eden. The people of Aram will go into exile to Kir,” says the LORD.*

Verse 3 introduces God’s announcement of judgment against each nation. It didn’t mean that Damascus only committed three sins, and then God thought of a fourth sin; it is talking about how they had “sin upon sin upon sin.” It then goes on to say “*Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth.*”

The region of Gilead belonged to Israel, and God promised to judge Damascus and the Syrians for coming against the land of God’s people, and inflicting such complete destruction that it would be as if a deep plow had come through and completely tilled the land. Tilling everything under so nothing was left. The fact that it says iron teeth could imply the extreme cruelty of the judgement at which God was going to bring against them as mentioned in verses 4 and 5.

Verse 6 says, *“The people of Aram will go into exile to Kir.”* This was fulfilled in 2 Kings 16:9 where it says, *“The king of Assyria complied by attacking Damascus and capturing it. He deported its inhabitants to Kir and put Rezin to death.”*

Let’s move on....

*“This is what the LORD says: ‘For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not relent. Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom, I will send fire on the walls of Gaza that will consume her fortresses. I will destroy the king<sup>[d]</sup> of Ashdod and the one who holds the scepter in Ashkelon. I will turn my hand against Ekron, till the last of the Philistines are dead,’ says the Sovereign LORD.”*

Gaza was a city of the Philistines, on the coast to the west of Israel and Judah. Because they came against God’s people to deliver them up to Edom, God promised to bring judgment against Gaza and the other cities of the Philistines. Now, what I find interesting about this is these cities are fighting against Israel to this day. These scriptures say that God is going to wipe them out for what they have done to His people.

God is not mad here because the soldiers of Israel were taken into slavery and then sold. That was the normal practice of the time. However, the Philistines used their supremacy to enslave whole populations – soldiers and civilians, men and women, adults and children, young and old – for commercial profit. Gaza did not even need slaves. They merely sold them to Edom for money.

But take notice here that this is talking about things to come as well. Since Gaza, Philistine, and the other cities still exist the complete fulfillment of this hasn’t taken place.

*“This is what the LORD says: ‘For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not relent. Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood, I will send fire on the walls of Tyre that will consume her fortresses.’”*

Since the city of Tyre (of Lebanon, to the north of Israel) sinned against God’s people as the Philistines did, they would receive a similar judgment. A fire that

will consume her. The walls of a city were her defense and strength. If the walls were burnt, the city would be defeated.

*<sup>11</sup> This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not relent. Because he pursued his brother with a sword and slaughtered the women of the land, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked, <sup>12</sup> I will send fire on Teman that will consume the fortresses of Bozrah."*

The people of Edom descended from Esau, who was the brother of Jacob and later named Israel. In this way, the LORD could speak of the people of Edom as brother to the people of God, in that they shared common ancestors in Abraham and Isaac. God promised judgment against Edom because they attacked Judah.

Look at what it says there. Edom's anger raged continually against Israel. For this, the judgment of God would come against them. We need to learn to give our anger and wrath to God and let Him be our avenger.

*<sup>13</sup> This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Ammon, even for four, I will not relent. Because he ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders, <sup>14</sup> I will set fire to the walls of Rabbah that will consume her fortresses amid war cries on the day of battle, amid violent winds on a stormy day. <sup>15</sup> Her king<sup>[e]</sup> will go into exile, he and his officials together," says the LORD.*

The area of Gilead belonged to Israel and suffered attacks not only from Syria, but also from their neighbor to the west, Ammon. We could say that Ammon sinned against the future by killing babies in the womb. Ring any bells here? Who would of thought that one of the minor prophets would be speaking out against abortion. I know I didn't see that one coming.

Because of these kind of attacks God promised judgement against Ammon. God is going to leave them without any leaders so that these types of practices won't continue.

I hate to beat a dead horse, so to speak, but I think that this further lends to why we don't here about the U.S. in Revalation. We live in a country that is not happy with corrupting its own people so we export our sins to other countries. We do this all for profit.

God is relentless, and God will not compromise. What Amos could only glimpse at, but we can see clearly is that our sovereign God who demands much from us has already given us so much more through his Son.

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