

## November 8

**Scriptures:** Read Amos 1 & 2

**Key Verse:** "...the Lord roars from Zion, and utters His voice from Jerusalem..." (Amos 1:2)

### Overview

Before targeting Israel with words of rebuke and condemnation, the prophet Amos, with great tact, draws the people's attention to his words by announcing judgment upon their enemies — something they would have wanted to hear. In each denunciation and prophecy of judgment, Amos begins with the expression, "For three transgressions ... and for four, I will not turn away its punishment" (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6); this signified that the cup of their iniquity was full to overflowing and their longsuffering God could no longer withhold judgment. The imminence of judgment is signified in Amos' appropriate choice of words: "The Lord roars from Zion" (1:2). As a shepherd, Amos knew that the roar of the lion came at the time of attack and before that time, the lion stalks his prey in silence.

Of the six heathen nations upon which Amos pronounces judgment, three were unrelated to Israel: Damascus (Syria/Aram), Gaza (Philistia), and Tyre (Phoenicia), and the other three were related: Edom (descendants of Esau), Ammon and Moab (descendants of Lot). Whether related or not, God's judgment was the same, and as Amos' audience was soon to discover, God's judgment would also be the same upon them. The fact that they had been chosen and favoured by God did not exempt them from His wrath, for God is just and sin must be punished.

The heathen nations are condemned for their cruel and inhumane treatment of the people of Israel. The people of Damascus were guilty of extreme cruelty to the people of Gilead, who were the Israelite tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, occupying the area east of the Jordan with the Syrian border to the north. The judgment that Amos predicted against them was carried out by Assyria (1:5; 2 Kings 16:9).

The Philistines and the commercial city of Tyre are also condemned and judged to perish because of their mistreatment of Israel in taking whole communities and selling them as slaves to their dreaded enemies. What made Tyre's offense more serious was that in so doing they broke the covenant that had been made between King Hiram of Tyre and kings David and Solomon (1:9; 1 Kings 5:12). Nebuchadnezzar was used of God to fulfill these judgments.

The people of Edom are judged because of their deep-seated, long-time hatred toward their brother Israel (1:11-12; cf. Gen. 25:22-25, 30) and because of their ruthless cruelty toward Israel on numerous occasions. They were envious of Israel and wanted their land; they also wanted to see them destroyed. But the Lord promised to bring retaliation upon Edom (cf. Ezek. 35:5, 10-11; Joel 3:19). The Ammonites likewise wanted Israel's land, which prompted them to attack Gilead from the south and attempt to kill all the inhabitants, including the atrocity of killing babies yet unborn. The Lord's punishment would surely come upon them. The armies of Assyria and later Babylon came to attack them in fulfillment of this prophecy. In the judgment against Moab, no crime against Israel is mentioned. Their crime was against the king of Edom which likely took place as an act of vengeance against Israel and Judah when Edom was their ally for a short

period of time (cf. 2 Kings 3:4-27). Once again the Lord would use Nebuchadnezzar to accomplish His purpose against Moab.

The accusations against the covenant people of Judah are different from those of the heathen nations. Judah is accused of religious and spiritual apostasy. The breaking of the covenant was a very serious offense, for which they too would suffer from the fire of God. Their “lies” were the false teachings which led them to practise idolatry (2:4-5). Since they had become like the heathens, so were they to be judged as the heathens.

Finally, Amos reached the main target of his prophecy — the proclamation of judgment upon Israel. They were guilty of the same sins as Judah, but they had strayed even further from the Lord. Their moral and ethical degradation came as a result of forsaking the Lord and His law. Amos exposed their corruption and guilt by denouncing their greed and lust after material things, their injustice and oppression of the poor, and their idolatry which involved immorality, such as the Canaanite fertility cults with their temple prostitutes. Their hearts were extremely hard. Instead of helping the poor, as they were constantly exhorted to do in the writings of Moses, they added to the sorrows of the poor by increasingly oppressing them (2:8; cf. Deut. 24:12-13). They crushed their human rights, were guilty of inhumane treatment of their fellow man, and showed disrespect for human sanctity.

Their faithlessness is contrasted with the Lord’s faithfulness. God had brought them out of Egypt, given them the land, defeated their enemies, and in His love sent them prophets and people who were consecrated to Him. Yet they spurned the Lord’s gracious provisions by causing the Nazarites to stumble and break their vow (cf. Num. 6:1-21), and they forced the prophets to stop proclaiming God’s Word. Their increasing grievous sins had gone past what should have been the breaking point (2:13). Now, nothing could stop the Lord’s wrath. Even the strongest and fastest would not escape (2:14-16).

## **Prayer**

Oh God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, give us grace to rid ourselves of anything that would displease You. Change and purify us we pray.