

THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

THE MINOR PROPHETS:

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS, PART 2

REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

Introduction

Amos was called by God to preach to Israel and the nations and call them to repentance before God their Creator and Lord. Amos was specially called and sent by God especially to tell Israel that she had broken God's covenant and that she had become like the nations or world around her (chapters 1-3). Israel was living at "ease in Zion" (6:1 ff) and Amos was called to awake her from her spiritual slumbers.

Although God was gracious in sending Amos to the people, and although Amos preached faithfully to the people of God's impending judgment upon them, many in Israel nevertheless did not have ears to hear. In fact, they refused to listen and rejected God's Word:

ESV Amos 2:11-12: 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. ¹² "But you made the Nazirites drink wine, and commanded the prophets, saying, '*You shall not prophesy.*'"

ESV Amos 3:7-8: "For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. ⁸ The lion has roared; who will not fear? *The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?*"

ESV Amos 7:12-13: And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, ¹³ *but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.*"

Despite the rejection of God's Word and Israel's refusal to repent and heed his preaching, Amos tells the people that they can find grace, mercy and life in YHWH alone *by faith*:

ESV Amos 5:4-6: For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: "Seek me and live; ⁵ but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing." ⁶ Seek the LORD and live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel,

ESV Amos 5:14-5: 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. ¹⁵ Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

But the people of Israel should not anticipate the Day of the LORD unless they repent. The Day of the LORD was expected by many in Israel to be a day of salvation and rewards for being in the covenant to those who were Abraham's children ethnically. It was believed that on the Day of the LORD all the nations outside of Israel and all foreign oppressors would be judged. Amos tells Israel that God's judgment on the Day of the LORD will include Israel herself in judgment as well as the other nations!

^{ESV} Amos 5:18-20: Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light,¹⁹ as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him.²⁰ Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

The central thesis of Amos' prophetic book is God's sovereign and omnipotent rule over all nations, and his universal judgment upon sin. God the Creator, Sovereign and Omnipotent Lord of Heaven and Earth is coming to judge his creation beginning with Israel. (1)

Outline of the Prophecy of Amos- How should we outline Amos' prophetic book? (2)
Amos' Book (of "oracles" or of "prophetic utterances") can be divided into **four sections**: (1) Chapters 1-2 consisting of superscription and an introduction, then a lengthy poem of eight oracles of judgment against the nations that border Israel and judgment upon Israel herself; (2) Chapters 3-6 contain Amos' covenant lawsuits against Israel and oracles of the judgment of God that will end in exile; (3) Chapters 7-9 which are made up of five visions; and (4) An epilogue promising blessing and renewal for Israel in chapter 9:11-15.

Covenant Lawsuit Form- How is chapter 3 of Amos' prophecy written in covenant lawsuit form (This includes four parts) (3)

In the prophecy of Amos, chapter 3 we notice the "covenant lawsuit form" written with four parts: 1) Introduction (of suzerain, king, plaintiff, judge-YHWH); 2) Introduction of Defendant and Historical Review of relationship (God and Israel); 3) Indictment; and 4) Judgment

Introduction of the LORD-YHWH/Plaintiff and Judge (3:1a):

"Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you..."

Introduction of Defendant and Historical Review of Covenant Breaking (3:1b):

"O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt..."

Indictment (3:2):

"You only have I know of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities..."

Witnesses are summoned to the court as evidence of covenant breaking (3:9a):

"Proclaim to the strongholds in Ashdod and to the strongholds in the land of Egypt..."

Judgment (3:11-15):

ESV Amos 3:11-15: Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "An adversary shall surround the land and bring down your defenses from you, and your strongholds shall be plundered." ¹² Thus says the LORD: "As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed. ¹³ "Hear, and testify against the house of Jacob," declares the Lord GOD, the God of hosts, ¹⁴ "that on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions, I will punish the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground. ¹⁵ I will strike the winter house along with the summer house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end," declares the LORD.

The covenant lawsuit was brought by Amos the Prophet (God's "D.A." and prosecutor) against Israel (the defendant) who was guilty of breaking the Mosaic covenant with YHWH. We will follow the "covenant lawsuit form" as the four parts of our outline in our sermon:

I. Introduction of the LORD-YHWH/Plaintiff and Judge (3:1a):

"Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you..."

God is the Creator and Covenant God who has been sinned against; the covenant has been broken although YHWH has revealed himself to the people in a special way and made his ways known (cf. 3:7).

Amos begins his prophecy with a Theophanic description of God's judgment upon Israel – YHWH's wrath is like the wrath of a pouncing lion:

ESV Amos 1:2 And he said: "The LORD roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers."

The LORD or YHWH *roars from Zion* Amos says! Zion was the City of Jerusalem but it was also known for the place where God resided or "tabernacled" with his people in the Temple mount at Jerusalem (Isa. 24:23; 31:9; Joel 3:16); the Prophet Joel also used this Theophanic imagery of God's judgment:

ESV Joel 3:16 The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. But the LORD is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.

The LORD YHWH will roar like a great lion pouncing on his foes- -his foes being his covenant people who have been unfaithful and disobedient to the covenant with him. Israel has become like the nations and so they can expect to be judged for their sins against YHWH. As in Joel's prophecy, Zion's land will be cursed so badly (cf. Deut. 26-29) that "the pastures of the shepherds mourn" (v. 2c) because of his judgment.

In Amos chapters 7:1-9:4 the Prophet Amos receives five visions that graphically picture Israel's coming to an end in judgment.

God is gracious in revealing his will through his prophets giving them another opportunity to repent (2 Peter 3:9-11). As we have learned, the prophets speak God's revelation to those who have ears to hear:

ESV Amos 3:7 "For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.

How is Amos like Moses? (4)

Amos is a partial fulfillment of some of the last words of Moses, where Moses tells the people that God will raise up a prophet like himself who will be God's mouthpiece (Jer. 26:5; Ezek. 38:17):

ESV Deuteronomy 18:15-19: "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers- it is to him you shall listen-¹⁶ just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.'¹⁷ And the LORD said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken.¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.¹⁹ And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

In fact, Amos' prophecy in chapter 3:1 begins specifically with a covenantal command to "Hear this word" or "Shema" (a command to hear, listen and obey) which is reminiscent of Moses' preaching before his death- -when Moses preaches to the Israelites that they are not to forget but to remember his important covenant words:

ESV Amos 3:1 Hear this word [שָׁמְעוּ עוֹ אֶת-דְּבַר-יְהוָה] that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt...

ESV Deuteronomy 4:1 "And now, O Israel, listen ["Hear"-שָׁמְעוּ] to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

ESV Deuteronomy 5:1 And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, "Hear, [שָׁמְעוּ] O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.

To command Israel to "hear" (*shema*) was the language of the covenant itself that implied obedience to what they heard. As Moses used this *Shema* to tell Israel how to keep covenant, Amos is now later in redemptive-history using *Shema* to tell Israel how she has failed to keep covenant (cf. Amos 3:13).

Amos not only called the people back to the words of God through Moses, but acted out as a kind of Intercessor-Mediator, a role similar to Moses. As Moses before him who interceded for the people when God's wrath was imminent because of their idolatrous worship of the golden calf, Amos intercedes as prophetic mediator for the people (7:1-5; cf. Exodus 32-33).

ESV Amos 7:2 When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said, "O Lord GOD, please forgive! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!"

Amos knows that the people deserve God's wrath for their lack of faith and repentance, but he still cares for them and reveals the heart of a true prophet-preacher who hopes that God will work through His Word by His Spirit to penetrate hardened and unbelieving hearts!

In chapters 1-2 Amos had prophesied against the nations that would receive God's judgment for sinful disobedience and then pointed a finger at the judgment also coming upon Judah and Israel (see last sermon).

How does Amos' disputation against Israel effectively use 'cause and effect' arguments to communicate? (5) In chapter 3, verses 3-8 Amos asks a series of rhetorical questions that should provoke the people to think about cause and effect. In the first five questions in this disputational style of arguing in 3:3-8, Amos moves from results back to the cause and in 3:6 the cause precedes the results (Note: Disputational argumentation is like a formal debate within a courtroom setting where a thesis is argued between prosecuting attorney and defense attorney in front of a judge and jury).

Chapter 3 is a revelation of God so that the judgment of Israel (effect) will make the people realize the sinful and covenant breaking reason (cause). Each question in verses 3-5 expects the answer "NO".

For example, in v. 3: Two cannot walk together and get to a final destination unless they agree to meet and get there together (the effect that this question establishes is two people walking together; the cause is their agreement to do so); in v. 4: A lion does not roar and scare off his prey, rather he roars after has gotten his prey (the effect is a lion roaring; the cause is the lion's prey), etc.

In chapter 3 verses 6-8, Amos lists the cause before the result. Especially important is v. 7: ***"For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets."*** The LORD draws his prophets into a personal revelation-relationship with himself. We should understand that when the text says the Lord God "does nothing" it doesn't mean he tells every detail of his revelation to his prophet (the LORD does a lot of things without first telling his secret revelation, Dt. 29:29), but that ***he does nothing in the sense of prosecuting a covenant-lawsuit judgment without first telling them through his servants the prophets.***

God will act in judgment (effect-result) and his plan (cause) has been revealed to his prophet. Amos has not conjured up God's judgment against Israel, but rather God has now planned to act against Israel in judgment and he has made this known to one of his servants to warn the people.

In light of the speaking of the prophet revealing God's revelation (effect-result), because God has made this known to him (the cause of his speaking), the people are to fear and believe the warning (v. 8). The impending judgment of the "roaring" lion-like God is the cause; the appearance of the prophet Amos is the effect. God is "roaring" against Israel (Amos brilliantly using the world of nature to dispute with the people in this courtroom

setting, also describes God in a manner that is full of images from the creation that will help the people to understand God's character more clearly).

The message of verses 3-8: "It is clear O Israel that two walk together because they are agreed; it is clear from nature that lions roar when they have found and caught their prey; it is clear from nature that a trap closes shut when a bird is in it; it is clear from nature than when a trumpet is blown, the people of a city should fear; it is clear from special revelation that God's judgment is coming imminently for Israel's sin because God has made it known to his prophet; and who can but prophesy?"

ESV Jeremiah 25:30 "You, therefore, shall prophesy against them all these words, and say to them: "'The LORD will roar from on high, and from his holy habitation utter his voice; he will roar mightily against his fold, and shout, like those who tread grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.

II. Introduction of Defendant and Historical Review of Covenant Breaking (3:1b):

"...O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt: 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth'..."

Amos is specifically using language from Moses and the covenant that God made with Israel with the use of the "memory terminology" of "that I brought up out of the land of Egypt". This should be remembered as God's Words before the giving of the Law (given in Exodus and the Book of Deuteronomy; cf. Amos 2:10):

ESV Exodus 20:2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

ESV Deuteronomy 5:6 "'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

In the Book of Exodus, God "remembered" his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and delivered Israel from over 400 years of slavery in Egypt (Exodus 2:24). The purpose of God's redemption of Israel was to form and make a people who would make manifest his Kingdom rule before the world. Israel was called to make God and his will known throughout the world. In light of God's grace to Israel being "brought up out of the land of Egypt" Israel was to serve God by faith.

How did God 'know' Israel according to Amos in chapter 3:2a? (6) God covenantally knew Israel in a way that was unique to all the other nations.

'You only have I known of all the families of the earth'... - 3:2a

The Hebrew verb "to know" [יָדַע] as in "You only have I known..." includes in its meaning sexual relationships (Gen. 4:1- "Adam knew his wife"), cognitive knowledge (Gen. 4:9: "I do not know"), recognition (Exodus 1:8- "Pharaoh did not know Joseph or recognize any claim on Joseph's descendants), and covenantal recognition (Exodus

33:12- “YHWH knows Moses by name; Psalm 1:6: “The LORD knows the way of the righteous; cf. Hos. 13:5). ***God covenantally recognizes or distinguishes Israel from all the families of the earth.***

Moses describes God’s covenantal recognition of Israel in these special ways (distinct from all other families on the earth: These are the covenant privileges that they had based upon their obedience to God’s covenant:

^{ESV} Exodus 19:4-6: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, *if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.* These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

^{ESV} Deuteronomy 7:6-8: "*For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.* ⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and *is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery,* from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

What are the theological implications of this special knowledge? (6)

Israel was called to be God’s “treasured possession among all peoples” (Exo. 19:5b; Deut. 7:6) *if they obeyed his voice and kept his covenant* (Exo. 19:5a). This covenant was conditional and bilateral. If the People of Israel were obedient in reliance upon God’s grace, then they would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exo. 19:6). Israel was redeemed to serve and be obedient to God.

Amos’ message to Israel is that Israel had become like the nations rather than being a light to the nations as God had called them to be (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). Israel’s covenant privileges always implied covenant responsibilities to obedience in reliance upon God’s grace (Exodus 20). By the time of Amos, Israel had been deceived into thinking that God’s earlier promises of peace, security and blessing in the land was **NOT** dependent upon their living obediently as part of the “deal”.

Israel misunderstood that the covenant blessings would only come through obedience (cf. Deut. 27-30); they had been taught incorrectly and Amos was sent to rebuke and correct their theological thinking. The people has falsely concluded that the blessings promised to Abraham and his seed would be unconditionally granted to every Israelite regardless of his or her beliefs and behavior (cf. Luke 3:7ff; John 8:31-59).

That is why it is interesting how Amos begins chapter 3 by addressing the covenant people as covenant people specifically who will be punished for their iniquities:

^{ESV} Amos 3:1-2: Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt: ² "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

How does Israel specifically break the covenant with God? (7) It is significant and sadly ironic that “the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt” and the people

that God has covenantally “known [יָדַעַי vb. know] of all the families of the earth” are being indicted for covenant unfaithfulness and disobedience. Those who were shown God’s favor and grace have not believed God’s Word.

Those who were part of the Abrahamic family in distinction from all other families of the earth have been unfaithful to their God (see Gen. 12:3; 28:14; cf. Exodus 32:11; Deut. 9:26). Like people who are members of the church who continue to believe in many gods, many ways to God, as well as false theological ideas and concepts and live in blatant sin with no disregard for their obedience to God, but trust in their church membership rather than in Christ –so was Israel as those in covenant with God (cf. Matthew 7:22-23; 23:23).

Amos challenges this kind of false theological thinking later when addressing the Israelites for trusting in their special relationship with God with no care of seeking obedience to him:

ESV Amos 9:7-10: "Are you not like the Cushites to me [Cushites (Ethiopians) understood redemptive-historically as the “sons of Ham”- Gen. 10:6-8 meaning non-covenant people], O people of Israel?" declares the LORD. "Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?"⁸ Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," declares the LORD.⁹ "For behold, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall to the earth."¹⁰ All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, 'Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.'

Rather than loving the LORD their God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength (Deut. 6:4ff) Israel was guilty of blatant and shameful idolatry against God along with the other nations under God (which was a breaking of the first commandment God gave to the people of Israel at Sinai (Exodus 20:1ff). In the Second Book of Kings, this is how Israel’s idolatry is described:

ESV 2 Kings 17:14-17: But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God.¹⁵ They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them.¹⁶ And they abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made for themselves metal images of two calves; and they made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal.¹⁷ And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

Amos calls the specific idolatrous images (“gods”) by name in his indictment against Israel’s covenant unfaithfulness:

ESV Amos 5:26-27: You shall take up Sikkuth your king, and Kiyun your star-god- your images that you made for yourselves, and I will send you into exile beyond Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.

Rather than loving their neighbor as themselves, there was great hatred and social injustice especially with regard to their poor revealing not her separate-ness (i.e.

“holiness”) from the ways of the nations (and worldly living and thinking) but how much like the world she had become:

ESV Amos 2:6-8: 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-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;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.

How did the covenant breaking and idolatry specifically begin after the “Golden Age” of Kings David and Solomon? Israel and Judah had been split up into two divided kingdoms because of covenant breaking and sinful leadership after the death of Solomon (1 Kings 11-12). Jeroboam I started his rule by building new temples at Dan (northern end of his kingdom) and at Bethel (in the southern end of his kingdom).

In these new idolatrous temples, he placed a golden calf in each to temple to represent the God who brought them up out of the land of Egypt (cf. Exodus 32). King Jeroboam I also anointed non-Levitical priests to serve in these temples and instituted new religious feasts in the place of those God has commanded through Moses (contrary to the clear revelation and commands of YHWH; cf. Deuteronomy 17:14-20).

King Ahab and his wife Jezebel had built a temple in honor of the Canaanite god Baal in the capital city of Samaria (1 Kings 16:29ff) and during their reign none of the lives of the prophets were safe! This syncretism (mixed worship of Baal and YHWH) still existed at Bethel in the southern part of the Northern Kingdom of Israel when Amos prophesied (Amos 7:10-17). At Bethel (the place where Jacob received the covenant promises made to Abraham and where heaven itself opened and the way to God by faith was shown to mankind) there was now idolatry, confusion and covenant breaking.

Rather than trusting in idols, Amos preached to the people to seek YHWH in order to live (5:4).

As we learned in our first sermon on Amos, Jeroboam II ruled during Amos’ prophetic ministry (ca. 760s) and he was a well liked king because of the prosperity of the nation during his reign. Before his rule, Syria under King Hazael had reigned over Israel oppressively (2 Kings 10:32; 13:3, 7), but now there was peace and prosperity. The wealthy were smug and lived at “ease” and complacently with no worries of judgment (6:1ff).

God’s Covenant Knowledge of Israel:

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth...” –Amos 3:2

We should be reminded of God’s special covenant knowledge of Israel as a means to better understand Amos’ prophecy. We should be reminded that the covenant that God made with the people of Israel under Moses (Exodus 24:1ff) was a covenant of works like Adam in the garden. Israel was placed under the obligation to keep perfectly the whole law: “All these things we will do!” Like Adam, Israel failed miserably because of

their sins and so God also when he made the covenant in blood provided them a sacrificial system in the Tabernacle.

Exodus 24:7: Then [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people."

[Remember covenants have four parts (1) **Preamble**: "I am the LORD YHWH..."; (2) **Historical Prologue**: "... Who brought you out of Egypt, the land of slavery; (3) **Stipulations**: How then should we live as your people: "If...Then..."; (4) **Covenant Ratification**: Signing and Sealing with Blood.]

Exodus 24:8: And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." ⁸ And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

The Covenant with God is ratified with blood; the people have agreed to this bilateral covenant ("bilateral" meaning a conditional covenant agreed upon by more than one or two parties). Some blood is on altar as atonement and propitiation, some blood is on the people symbolizing what is required of them if they break the covenant, and at the same time symbolizing their consecration for fellowship to God.

It is interesting and important to note that although God made or "cut" a covenant with Israel after the giving of his law (Exodus 20), he also provided a full and perfect description of a Tabernacle where God the Holy and Righteous One would accept sacrifices as a payment in blood for the transgressions of the covenant (25-40: The last fifteen chapters in the Book of Exodus contain the detailed description of the Tabernacle that Moses was to construct that was to be identical to the true dwelling place of God in heaven).

Review of the covenants in Scripture. *What are the differences between the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants? (8):*

Covenant of Law after (in context of) unconditional covenant of grace between God the Father and the Son (Heb. 13:20, 21: "the eternal covenant"), and covenant promises to Abraham and "His Seed" (Gen. 15; 17).

Abrahamic Covenant: All of grace, to the whole human race. Based on grace-promises *alone!*

Unilateral-Unconditional Covenant with Abraham (ratified on the Lord's own blood-symbolic in the animal cut long ways into two pieces).

Mosaic Covenant: Of grace, to those primarily in the Kingdom of God. Based or founded on works although there are gracious aspects to it (God initiates it and administers it for his glory).

Bilateral-Conditional Covenant with Moses and the Nation of Israel; a covenant that the Nation of Israel could break, but elect Israel could still take part in the grace-inheritance-promises to Abraham in the unilateral covenant *by faith!*

God teaches Moses in Exodus 19:4-6 and Exodus 24 that he saved them for a purpose: for his glory and by his grace alone!

Grace-Promise

Law-Works

Galatians 3: Sin was in the world, and the Law was brought into redemptive-history to focus the people on the covenant promises of grace alone!

Law-Revealed the people's sin and unrighteousness before God and pointed them toward God's grace-promises to Abraham!

Sacrifices of Blood- Showed the need for a final sacrifice, a substitutionary sacrifice of blood.

III. Indictment (3:2):

“You only have I know of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities...”

Israel is being indicted for breaking the Mosaic Covenant, but God has graciously allowed for those who believe his promises, and depended upon his grace found typologically in the sacrifices to be saved.

However, the loss of the land will be directly for failing to keep the Mosaic covenant of works (cf. Deut. 26-30) which was what Moses said would occur:

ESV Deuteronomy 30:1-6: "And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, ² and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴ If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. ⁵ And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. ⁶ And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Israel was to be exiled out of the land, sent “east of Eden” into exile just as Adam before her! Both had failed to live the covenant of works and so the earthly land that was a type

of the whole earth and the place where God covenantally dwelled with his people was to be permanently lost. Israel's reenactment of the loss of paradise in redemptive-history was to teach the whole world that salvation is by grace alone- -never works! But as Deuteronomy teaches, there would still be salvation and grace extended to some: God would one day circumcise the hearts of his people (cf. Ezekiel 36-37; Jeremiah 31:31-34)

The promises of grace to Abraham and David were never to be lost to those who believed God's promises of mercy, compassion and grace, and believed the blood of the typological sacrifices covered their sins. In fact, the Prophet Jeremiah pointed exiled Israel to a glorious day when a new covenant would be made *not like the old covenant that was broken*, and through the blood of this new covenant forgiveness of sins would be permanent! The Law would be written on hearts and not merely tablets of stone (cf. 2 Cor. 3:7ff):

ESV Jeremiah 31:31-34: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

These sacrifices were to cover their blatant transgressions and cause Israel to look by faith forward to a once for all sacrifice that God would provide in time. Rather than believing God's covenant promises, the people merely went through the "sacrificial motions". They revealed in their behavior and actions that they did not love God nor their neighbor and so their sacrifices to God were not made by faith. As Amos says:

ESV Amos 5:21-24: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.²² Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them.²³ Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen.²⁴ But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Evidence of covenant breaking is brought into the courtroom against Israel; witnesses are called from Ashdod and Egypt (3:9a):

"Proclaim to the strongholds in Ashdod and to the strongholds in the land of Egypt..."

Amos desires for the people to take seriously his message from God concerning judgment and not prosperity and peace. The "strongholds" (fortresses or citadels) in v. 9 are the palaces of the wealthy people. Two foreign nations are called as "impartial experts" witnesses to the city of Samaria's oppression of people (v. 9b) and how they live wickedly in their homes in the lap of luxury (v. 10). In other words, the upper class live in luxury while ignoring the poor and helpless.

The people of Israel would abhor the thought of these “foreigners to the covenant” being called as witnesses against their covenant disobedience. Ashdod (perhaps Assyria as the LXX renders it, or Philistia is in mind) and Egypt are called to be witnesses against Israel; the nations are called upon to witness against Israel’s sinfulness.

The wealthy of Samaria (including her political leaders and socially influential people) do not know “how to do right” (v. 10), and so these pagan witnesses from Ashdod-Philistia and Egypt (the place where Israel was redeemed by YHWH) are summoned to stand on the mountains surround Samaria and witness to the sinful chaos and oppression within her gates. The unfaithful covenant-breaking actions of the leaders of Israel will produce great destruction and calamity for all of Israel (vv. 11-15).

How specifically will God judge Israel for covenant disobedience? (9)

IV. Judgment (3:11-15):

ESV Amos 3:11-15: Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "An adversary shall surround the land and bring down your defenses from you, and your strongholds shall be plundered." ¹² Thus says the LORD: "As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed. ¹³ "Hear, and testify against the house of Jacob," declares the Lord GOD, the God of hosts, ¹⁴ "that on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions, I will punish the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground. ¹⁵ I will strike the winter house along with the summer house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end," declares the LORD.

As you recall, the rule and reign of Jeroboam II of the Northern Kingdom was a time of great peace and prosperity in Israel (Amos 6:1ff). However, calamity worse than the earthquake that had shook the land literally (1:1) was coming upon the people.

God’s judgment would be meted out by the soon to be massive and powerful Assyrian Empire. God would raise up this Assyrian army that would eventually defeat and destroy the City of Samaria in 722 B.C. as his judgment against his covenant breaking people.

How would this judgment come upon Samaria? God would send an army that will surround the land of Israel and there will be no escape from defeat (v.11). The city’s fortified and strong walls will be torn down and the enemy will breach the wall and destroy the city. Then the enemy will plunder the homes (“strongholds” or “fortresses”) of the wealthy. This judgment of God recalls the covenant curses that were promised by God if Israel failed to keep covenant:

ESV Deuteronomy 28:49-52: The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand. ⁵⁰ a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young. ⁵¹ It shall eat the offspring of your cattle and the fruit of your ground, until you are destroyed; it also shall not leave you grain, wine, or oil, the increase of your herds or the young of your flock, until they have caused you to perish. ⁵² "They shall besiege you in all your towns, until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout all your land. And they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land, which the LORD your God has given you.

Because of the devastation of God's judgment, there will be little remaining in Israel, like the remains of a defenseless sheep after having been ravaged by a lion (v. 12). There will be "bits and pieces" left but the life will be taken. Based on v. 8, it is likely that Amos is continuing the imagery he used of God in comparing God and his power to that of a lion.

God specifically speaks of his judgment against their trusting in their false gods and affluence: "I will punish the altars of Bethel..." (v. 14) and "I will strike the winter house along with the summer house..." (v. 15- Having both a winter and summer house in the ancient world was a sign of great wealth and luxury). God will destroy the people's religious places of worship and their places of security in this world. God will completely obliterate two important sources of security: the places where the people worshiped in Bethel full of idolatry, and their great mansions in which they lived lavishly ("stronghold houses" or "fortresses" or "citadels") will be torn down (v. 15c).

These altars of Bethel included the king's official temple (7:13) that contained the golden calf:

ESV 1 Kings 12:28-32: So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." ²⁹ **And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.** ³⁰ Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one. ³¹ He also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites. ³² And Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. **So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made.**

It is important to note that God even says that the "horns of the altar shall be cut off" (v. 14b) symbolizing the removal of any hope of being covered by atonement blood (and also the horns of the altar were the place of holding to pray in times of trouble).

God will exile the sinful covenant breakers:

ESV Amos 4:1-3: "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring, that we may drink!'" ² **The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness that, behold, the days are coming upon you, when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks.** ³ **And you shall go out through the breaches, each one straight ahead; and you shall be cast out into Harmon," declares the LORD.**

Amos concludes the word from the Lord by rebuking and calling the self-centered, wealthy women of Samaria the "cows of Bashan" (referring to the image of the calf and Baal represented by a cow as well as the well-fed cows known to populate the farms of Bashan). Amos implies that these sinful Samaritan women have become like the idolatrous images they worship; they have come to look and act like fat cows! These women oppress the poor and needy, and they are so uppity that they desire their husbands to submit and wait upon them! (cf. 4:1d)

As representatives of the whole city, these "cows of Bashan" shall be taken away into exile not by chariots or carriages drawn by horses but by hooks used for slaves (with

imagery of the fishing trade) and they shall be cast into Harmon (or outside the promised land, cf. 5:27- “Beyond Damascus) (vv. 2-3). The hooks give a picture of captured slaves who are marching through dust and grime into exile with the prisoners connected by ropes through a hook in one’s nose or lip (cf. *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*, J. B. Pritchard, pg. 440).

The picture Amos describes here is of fat, opulently dressed, bathed, clean, and perfumed women in their fine jewelry and dresses, white hat proudly perched on their heads, being dragged by the nose into filthy and dirty slavery and nakedness because the LORD YHWH like a lion has pounced on them in His covenant judgment!

God swears his covenant oath against these women who represent the whole city (v.2: “The Lord God has sworn by his holiness...”). Because of God’s swearing on oath, the people will go into exile for covenant disobedience. This oath of YHWH is as sure as the oath YHWH made in Psalm 89:36-37 about placing his own Son on the throne as rightful and holy heir:

ESV Psalm 89:34-36: I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. ³⁵ Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. ³⁶ His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me.

God would vow in oath to keep his covenant, but his people? Rather than Israel living in covenant faithfulness and loving God and neighbor, the people lived a lifestyle of violence, oppression, anarchy, selfishness and injustice toward others (see specifically 3:9-10; 4:1; cf. Lev. 25:35-43; Deut. 15:7-18; 24:15); the consequences will be the curses of the covenant (Deut. 27:1ff).

Why is Jesus Christ the only hope of salvation and security for Israel and the nations? **(10)**

All people can be tempted to place their hope in their mere outward religious profession or behavior and trust in their wealth and possessions. Even those within the visible covenant community of God place their hope in this privilege rather than in the responsibility of believing God, and hearing and believing His Word. God is showing all mankind in this chapter from Amos’ prophecy that our religious systems and religious symbols and our wealth and riches cannot save us from his wrath to come!

Only Christ can save us!

God chastised the visible covenant community in Amos in order that the righteous elect within the covenant community would believe and a remnant would be preserved and remain. God brought pain and suffering to this people in order to discipline them corporately, in order to prepare them for the coming of Jesus Christ; at the coming of Jesus Christ many in Israel did not believe and rejected the Messiah sent to them (John 1:11-13)- -but there was Mary, Joseph, Elisabeth, Zechariah, Simeon, Anna, Nathaniel, the Apostles and others who were anticipating the coming judgment and salvation of God.

As the Church we should remember that Israel's experience and story is for our own learning and warning and instruction. It is easy to read and study Old Testament texts like the Prophet Amos and try to get "practical application" that misses the important point of these Scriptures: We are to learn from Israel's story; this *is our practical application*. If the people of God in the Old Covenant sinned against God, then we too can fall into sin as the visible covenant community of God NOW. In fact, the Apostle Paul says clearly to the Corinthian Church in his warning against idolatry and unbelief, or placing our hope in anything and everything *other than Jesus Christ as a hope of escaping God's wrath* (1 Cor. 10:6, 11:

*Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.*⁷ *Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play."*⁸ *We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.*⁹ *We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents,*¹⁰ *nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.*¹¹ *Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*

Many trust today in their man-made religions or myths, or they put too much emphasis on the so-called good works that they do for God, and many put their trust in their great wealth. Some who are rich see no need of preparedness for the coming day of God's judgment, which show no interest in the recognition, service and worship of God (cf. Rom. 1:19-32). In fact, in James 5:3-6, the apostle speaks like the Prophet Amos of some in the visible Church and the world who acted very much like these "cows of Bashan" – which still speaks today:

^{ESV} James 5:1-6: Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.² Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten.³ Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days.⁴ Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.⁵ You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.⁶ You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

God desires our hearts and love not merely our religious devotions and mere outward behavior: *"To obey is better than sacrifice..."* God desires that our trust is in Him not in our worldly religions, wealth and riches. We dare not trust in that which God has provided for us! God grants worldly wealth for our enjoyment and to share with those in need, but he also warns us about trusting in our riches, and how the love of money and the love of God cannot go together (Love of God and love of Mammon are mutually exclusive devotions, Phil. 4:12; 1 Tim. 6:10-18; Matthew 6:21ff)

Our security religiously and financially must be in the LORD, Maker of Heaven and Earth! Jesus Christ was the seed of Abraham who perfectly kept the covenant God the Father made with him from eternity past (cf. Heb. 13:20-21). The Abrahamic Covenant was a unilateral covenant of grace because God would send the seed of Abraham who is

Christ (Gal. 3:16) to live perfectly and obediently according to the bilateral Mosaic covenant of works. Christ was the heir of all the promises made to Father Abraham.

Jesus Christ came in the fullness of the times to do what Adam and Israel failed to do: perfectly keep the covenant. Jesus Christ came in the fullness of the times to undo what Adam and Israel did do in sinning covenantally against God: die under the covenant curses upon the cross. In Jesus Christ we find the true worship of God and true security and salvation from our sins and from the wrath to come!

In Jesus Christ, Israel and all the nations can find security and salvation (not in mere religion and money) and be eternal heirs of not merely the Promised Land that was temporal but heirs of the entire world- -a new creation (Rev. 21:1ff).

Hallelujah! Thanks be to God for His Christ!

CRB

www.aplacefortruth.org

Bibliography for Further Reading

The Christ of the Prophets- O. Palmer Robertson

Biblical Theology- Geerhardus Vos

The Prophet and His Message- Michael J. Williams

Interpreting the Prophetic Word- Willem A. Vangemeren

The Minor Prophets, Commentaries on the Old Testament- Keil and Delitzsch

The Minor Prophets- Hosea, Joel, and Amos- Thomas Edward McComiskey

Preaching Christ from the Old Testament- Sidney Greidanus

The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text- Sidney Greidanus

God's Unfaithful Wife: A Biblical Theology of Spiritual Adultery- Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr.

A Survey of the Old Testament- Andrew Hill and John Walton