



01 session 1

JUDGMENT DECLARED



EXPLORE scripture AMOS 2:4-16

AMOS 2:4-8

4 The LORD says: I will not relent from punishing Judah for three crimes, even four, because they have rejected the instruction of the LORD and have not kept his statutes. The lies that their ancestors followed have led them astray. **5** Therefore, I will send fire against Judah, and it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem. **6** The LORD says: I will not relent from punishing Israel for three crimes, even four, because they sell a righteous person

for silver and a needy person for a pair of sandals. **7** They trample the heads of the poor on the dust of the ground and obstruct the path of the needy. A man and his father have sexual relations with the same girl, profaning my holy name. **8** They stretch out beside every altar on garments taken as collateral, and in the house of their God they drink wine obtained through fines.

AMOS 2:9-11

9 Yet I destroyed the Amorite as Israel advanced; his height was like the cedars, and he was as sturdy as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath. **10** And I brought you from the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness in

order to possess the land of the Amorite. **11** I raised up some of your sons as prophets and some of your young men as Nazirites. Is this not the case, Israelites? This is the LORD's declaration.

AMOS 2:12-16

12 But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets, "Do not prophesy." **13** Look, I am about to crush you in your place as a wagon crushes when full of grain. **14** Escape will fail the swift, the strong one will not maintain his strength, and the warrior will not save his life.

15 The archer will not stand his ground, the one who is swift of foot will not save himself, and the one riding a horse will not save his life. **16** Even the most courageous of the warriors will flee naked on that day — this is the LORD's declaration.



EXPLORE options

1. A Good Example

Share a story about a time when you were a good example to one of your younger siblings, cousins, or friends. For example, maybe you taught them how to clean up after themselves or you showed them how to ask for something politely. Alternately, you could tell a story about a time when you were a bad example and got someone else into trouble because of it. Ask students to raise their hands if they can tell you what it means to be a good example. In today's session, we are going to see that Israel was not giving the nations around them a good example of what it meant to be God's people. They were representing Him very poorly, and they would discover that if we ignore God's commands, sooner or later we will face His judgment.

2. Follow Me

Clear a space in the center of the room and instruct students to stand in a circle. Tell them that today you're going to play a game that involves imitating each other. Choose a student to go first and ask them to choose an animal. They should start the game by making sounds and motions to imitate that animal (e.g., flap their arms and cluck to imitate a chicken). The other students in the circle should imitate them. After a while, the student to their right should start to imitate a different animal instead. The rest of the students should begin to follow this new set of motions. Keep going until everyone has had a turn to be the leader, or until you need to move on with the lesson because of time. Point out that in this case, the rules of the game said that imitating the leader was a good thing. Judah, on the other hand, was imitating the other nations around them and breaking God's law. Because they were ignoring God and His truth, they were going to face His judgment.



LET'S talk

Have you ever acted in a way that you regretted later?

Explain

What kind of person do you want to be? How does this kind of person treat others?



THIS WEEK'S focus

We all know that God knows what's best for us and that we should obey Him. However, sometimes we still do the wrong thing, even when we know what the right thing is. When we do whatever feels best to us at the moment instead of doing what God wants us to do, we end up hurting other people and offending God. As soon as we realize that we've done this, it's important to repent—to apologize to God and the person we hurt, fix whatever we did wrong, and choose to act differently in the future. In today's session, we'll see that God's people weren't doing this. They were ignoring God and doing whatever they wanted, taking advantage of the poor and worshipping the false gods of other nations. Because they were disobeying God and ignoring His truth, He was going to judge them.



CONVERSATION questions

READ AMOS 2:4-8.

4 The LORD says: I will not relent from punishing Judah for three crimes, even four, because they have rejected the instruction of the LORD and have not kept his statutes. The lies that their ancestors followed have led them astray. **5** Therefore, I will send fire against Judah, and it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem. **6** The LORD says: I will not relent from punishing Israel for three crimes, even four, because they sell a righteous person

for silver and a needy person for a pair of sandals.

7 They trample the heads of the poor on the dust of the ground and obstruct the path of the needy. A man and his father have sexual relations with the same girl, profaning my holy name.

8 They stretch out beside every altar on garments taken as collateral, and in the house of their God they drink wine obtained through fines.

Amos wasn't like the other prophets of his day, who belonged to a guild funded by the king. Amos was a shepherd by profession, and he traveled from his home—about ten miles south of Jerusalem, in Judah—to the city of Bethel in Israel to deliver the message God had given him. Bethel was a center of idol worship and the place from which Israel's king, Jeroboam II, reigned. It took great faith and courage for an ordinary man like Amos to leave the source of his income to challenge a popular king on his own turf, but Amos knew that the God who had called him to the task deserved to be obeyed (see Amos 7:15).

KEY QUESTION

.01 Why was God planning to judge Judah and Israel? What were they doing wrong?

In verses 1-3, Amos had delivered a message of God's judgment on Israel's neighbors—Syria, the Philistines, Tyre, Edom, the Ammonites, and Moab—who were all guilty of serious sin against God. Starting here in verse 4, Amos delivered a similar message to Judah and Israel. Unlike their neighbors, who were only held responsible for the moral law that God puts in the heart of every person, Judah and Israel also knew God's covenant law. They had agreed to obey it and were responsible for it (see Ex. 19–20). They had also experienced God's favor. But instead of showing proper reverence for God by obeying Him and allowing Him to reveal His character to the world through them, Judah and Israel disregarded God's law and behaved like the pagan nations around them. They showed utter disregard for their fellow human beings, taking advantage of the poor and engaging in acts of sexual immorality.

We have new animated videos! Check out video 1 on why Amos and Jonah matter in the lives of students at goexplorethebible.com/students.

Need more commentary? Use discount code EXPLOREFALL22 at logos.com/explorethebible to download more Bible commentary on Amos for free.



SCRIPTURE commentary

.02 How did it affect God's reputation among the nations when His people disobeyed Him? What are some ways that we still affect God's reputation today?

.03 Which makes more sense to you, God's judgment of Israel's neighbors and enemies or God's judgment of Judah and Israel? Explain.

Because Judah and Israel knew God, but had still chosen to act like the nations that did not know Him, God judged them along with those nations. If they would not show the world who God was by obeying Him, God would show the world who He was by punishing them for their disobedience.



HISTORY | How did Israel take advantage of the poor in Amos's day?

The Israelites were showing utter disregard for their fellow human beings by selling people who couldn't pay back their debts into slavery. Those they didn't sell, they manipulated and mistreated for their own purposes. The law allowed Israelites to take the cloak of someone who borrowed money from them as collateral for a debt. However, they were supposed to give that cloak back at night so the debtor didn't freeze (see Ex. 22:25-27), and the Israelites weren't doing this. In addition, some Israelites were charging random fines that the poor couldn't contest and then collecting wine from them as payment. Then they got drunk on that wine in places of worship during festivals meant to honor God.



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ITEM 6 | The prophets of the Bible completed their assignments with varying degrees of efficiency. To review Amos's performance, see the poster "**These Prophets Understood the Assignment.**"

AMOS 2:4-8

2:4. All the Gentile nations were accused of crimes against humanity, but *Judah* was charged with unfaithfulness to its covenant with Yahweh as described in the law. The *lies* mentioned here are idols.

2:5. The threatened judgment on Judah was *fire* of the sort with which Tyre and Edom were threatened in chapter 1 (see 1:10,12). Being "God's people" does not create immunity to the judgment of God but in fact increases accountability. Their guilt placed them alongside those foreign nations who perpetrated atrocities on fellow human beings.

2:6. Selling *a needy person for a pair of sandals* probably refers to selling a debtor into slavery over an insignificant sum of money.

2:7-8. This text describes outrages committed at the religious shrines. Men had sexual relations with shrine prostitutes, even going to the point of *a man and his father* sharing the same woman; they did this while lying on *garments* that they had taken from poor people as *collateral* for loans; they did this at pagan altars all over the countryside; and they combined this with drinking bouts at the shrines, using *wine* they had taken from powerless people.



CONVERSATION questions

READ AMOS 2:9-11.

9 Yet I destroyed the Amorite as Israel advanced; his height was like the cedars, and he was as sturdy as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath. **10** And I brought you from the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness in order to possess the land of the Amorite. **11** I raised up some of your sons as prophets and some of your young men as Nazirites. Is this not the case, Israelites? This is the LORD's declaration.

Through Amos, God reminded Judah and Israel of His faithfulness to them. Generations earlier, God had led His people out of slavery in Egypt under Moses's leadership. Then He had taken care of them for forty years in the wilderness and given them the promised land of Canaan to live in. He had even removed the Amorites—a strong and thriving people—from Canaan in order to give it to the Israelites. Now, the rebellious actions of Judah and Israel suggested they had forgotten all of this.

.04 Why did Israel and Judah forget about God's faithfulness? Was this a good excuse for their behavior?

Even if Judah and Israel had forgotten about the things God had done for them generations earlier, they had no excuse for overlooking the things God was still doing for them. God was still calling children from both Judah and Israel to be Nazirites and prophets. The Nazirites served as reminders of the holiness God expected from His people, and the prophets reminded God's people of His expectations so they couldn't pretend they didn't know how to behave. Even in their rebellion, God was guiding His people back into intimate fellowship with Him, but they resisted. Like ungrateful children, they rejected God's grace and went their own way.

KEY QUESTION

.05 How did God show grace to His people even when they were disobeying Him? How does God show grace to us today?



CULTURE | Who were the Nazirites, and what can we learn from their example?

Nazirites were people who took a vow to set themselves apart for God by abstaining from certain worldly things (see Num. 6:1-8). Anyone—rich or poor, male or female—could become a Nazirite for a specified period of time, usually thirty days. Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist were Nazirites for life. Today, anyone who puts their faith in Jesus for salvation becomes a Christian. God adopts us into His family and sets us apart for His own glory. He sends the Holy Spirit to live in us and help us live holy lives. The more intentionally we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, the more we stand out. Like the Nazirites, we proclaim God worthy of our worship and utter devotion.



BE VULNERABLE

Because humans are selfish by nature and transformation into the image of Jesus takes a lifetime, sometimes we all do things we know not to do. Consider telling your group about a time that you knowingly made a selfish choice that damaged God's reputation or hurt someone else. What were the results of that choice? How did you make it right? What did you learn from the experience? How did it impact your future choices?

AMOS 2:9-11

2:9-10. In verses 9-12, God gives a historical retrospective, comparing His favors toward Israel with Israel's impudent rejection of Him. Disregarding historical sequence, the conquest of Canaan (*the Amorite*, v. 9) is mentioned before the exodus and wilderness wandering (see v. 10). This is probably because the focus here is on how Israel occupied the land by virtue of God's grace, thus implying that God could just as easily expel them from the land. *Amorite* refers to the population of Palestine before Israel occupied the land. Their reputation for abnormal size and strength preceded Israel's encounter with them (see Num. 13:28,31-33). Perhaps Amos was referencing God's complete annihilation of the Amorite as an implicit warning to Israel, the present occupant of the land.

2:11. The raising up of *prophets* and *Nazirites* was a divine act comparable to the destruction of the Amorite, the exodus from Egypt, guidance in the desert, and placement in the land. The *prophets*, as those who promote God's will, and the *Nazirites*, as examples of great devotion to God, came to the Israelites as representatives sent by God to turn the people to righteousness.



CONVERSATION questions

READ AMOS 2:12-16.

12 But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets, “Do not prophesy.”

13 Look, I am about to crush you in your place as a wagon crushes when full of grain. **14** Escape will fail the swift, the strong one will not maintain his strength, and the warrior will not save his life.

15 The archer will not stand his ground, the one who is swift of foot will not save himself, and the one riding a horse will not save his life. **16** Even the most courageous of the warriors will flee naked on that day — this is the LORD’s declaration.

Not only did Judah and Israel reject God’s grace and go their own way, but they also made it difficult for the few who wanted to honor and obey God to do so. As part of their vow, Nazirites abstained from alcohol, presumably to keep their thoughts clear so they could concentrate on God. The Israelites didn’t want to be challenged or shamed by the Nazirites’ example, however, so they forced the Nazirites to drink wine. The Israelites also told the prophets not to prophesy. Not only did the Israelites not want to do what God told them to do, but they didn’t even want to know what God had to say. They could have just ignored the Nazirites and prophets, but the Israelites were more concerned with pursuing their own desires and comforts than they were about the spiritual health of others.

KEY QUESTION

.06 Can we treat people badly and still truly worship God? Explain. Why do we sometimes think we can?

.07 Why were God’s people disrespecting the Nazirites and prophets? How do you think it felt to be treated this way? Have you ever felt this way?

The judgment God declared over His people through Amos was just as complete as their rebellion. Because Judah and Israel had been enjoying a time of prosperity, some people were probably feeling invincible; however, God made it clear that no one would escape the punishment they deserved. Just as a heavy wagon leaves ruts in the muddy ground, God intended to crush those who disobeyed Him and jeopardized His reputation in the world. On that day, it wouldn't matter whether a person was fast, strong, talented, wealthy, or courageous. Everyone would feel the effects of God's wrath equally and stand before Him stripped of everything that had once given them a false sense of confidence.

.08 How do we sometimes behave similarly to Judah and Israel of Amos's day?

Two years after God's declaration, a great earthquake came (see Amos 1:1; Zech. 14:5). Thirty years later, Israel was overthrown by Assyria, and the survivors were deported and replaced by Assyrians (see 2 Kings 17). The God of Israel keeps His promises. He will not be mocked.



LEADER PACK

ITEM 4 | Because Judah and Israel rejected God's grace and mistreated others, they faced God's judgment. For more details about what judgment entails, see the **10 Words in Amos, Hosea, Jonah, & Micah** poster

AMOS 2:12-16

2:12. Israel's response to God's gracious provision of spiritual leaders was a deliberate effort to prevent them from functioning. They forced the *Nazirites* to break their vows of dedication to God, and they commanded the *prophets* not to function as messengers of God. The Israelite rejection of both the prophets and the Nazirites represents their rejection of God Himself.

2:13. Amos used a metaphor from farm life to describe the method of God's judgment against Israel. As a cart overloaded with *grain* crushes the earth (a possible allusion to an earthquake), so God would crush His people with the same force He used to demolish the Amorites.

2:14-16. Amos described the panic that would prevail among Israel's military forces when God approached in judgment. Amos's portrait suggests total chaos and overwhelming defeat for Israel. Israel's best soldiers would drop their weapons and run. Israel expected the day of the Lord to come for them as a positive benefit (see 5:18-20; compare with Zeph. 1:14-18). Amos announced the opposite result of that day. It would be a day of God's judgment against His rebellious people. The day would bring defeat, not deliverance.



NOW What?

CENTRAL truth

If we ignore God and His truth, sooner or later, we will face His judgment.

.09 What can we learn from Amos's example? How can we imitate his faithfulness in our own setting?

.10 Why is it important to rely on God instead of relying on ourselves? What are some ways we can practice doing this?

.11 How can we make sure we are making a positive impact on the world in the way God wants us to?

KEY QUESTION

.12 What can we do to make sure that everyone is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve as bearers of God's image?



THE STUDENT LEADER PACK is available for purchase on lifeway.com/explorethebiblestudents. It includes valuable posters that are referenced throughout the *Leader Guide*, Family Connection guides that equip families to discuss the Bible on the go, a Midweek study of a complementary book of the Bible, a link to training audio to help leaders prepare for each session, and PowerPoint templates with graphics from the quarter study to help prepare slides for teaching.



DAILY devotions

The Bible is no ordinary book—it is God’s powerful Word and it is given to us for our good (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12-13). So we should read the Bible more carefully and thoughtfully than any other book. This is where the 7 Arrows of Bible Reading come in—these 7 questions will train you and your students to get more out of your time in the Bible and experience its life-transforming power. Your students’ *Daily Discipleship Guide* (item 005646504) contains five days of Daily Devotions built on the 7 Arrows. Here is a summary of the texts they will be studying. We encourage you to follow along and use the 7 Arrows questions to guide your own study of God’s Word.

7 ARROWS FOR BIBLE reading



What does this passage say?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage tell us about man?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?



What does this passage demand of me?

LEADER challenge

MEMORIZE

Amos 1:2

CONNECT

Send a group email or group message to your students, encouraging them to complete their daily devotions. You might also consider sharing your own insights from the daily readings as a means of encouraging them.

DAY 1 AMOS 1:1-5

DAY 2 AMOS 2:4-8

DAY 3 AMOS 2:9-11

DAY 4 AMOS 2:12-16

DAY 5 ROMANS 2:1-5