

Listen to God

AMOS 2:4-16

⁴ The LORD says: I will not relent from punishing **Judah** **A** 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** **B** have led them astray. ⁵ Therefore, I will send fire against Judah, and it will consume the **citadels** **C** of Jerusalem. ⁶ The LORD says: I will not relent from punishing Israel for three crimes, even four, because they **sell** **D** **a righteous person for silver** **E** 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**, **F** profaning my holy name. ⁸ They stretch out beside every altar on **garments taken as collateral**, **G** and in the house of their God they drink wine obtained through fines. ⁹ Yet I destroyed the **Amorite** **H** 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**. **I** Is this not the case, Israelites? This is the LORD's declaration. 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** **J** 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** **K** — this is the LORD's declaration.

For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- A** One of the twelve tribes of Israel. After the death of Solomon, Israel split into two kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom took the name *Israel*, and the Southern Kingdom, *Judah*. The nation of Judah also included the tribe of Benjamin (1 Kings 12:21; 2 Chron. 11:10).
- B** They followed the lies of false prophets who led them astray (Jer. 23:30-32; Ezek. 13).
- C** "Palaces" (KJV); "strongholds" (ESV).
- D** Israel was guilty of the atrocity that God delivered them from in Egypt: forced slavery.
- E** "The poor who can't repay their debts" (NLT); "honest people who cannot pay their debts" (GNT), demonstrating the low value placed on human life.
- F** Prohibited by the law (Ex. 21:7-11; Lev. 18:8), Paul echoed the prohibition in 1 Corinthians 5:1, and demanded that the church exercise discipline and remove the offender from the church.
- G** The law required pledged garments from the needy be returned to the owner by sunset, and a widow's garment was not to be taken in pledge at all (Deut. 24:12-17).
- H** The Amorites were the people who occupied the promised land before Israel.
- I** A Nazirite was an Israelite set aside for God's service, who vowed to abstain from alcohol, let his hair grow, and avoid contact with corpses (Num. 6).
- J** Bows and arrows were long-range arms (up to four hundred yards), with some bows being from three to six feet in length, requiring the archer to stand for accuracy.
- K** "The most courageous of your fighting men will drop their weapons and run for their lives" (NLT).

1. WRONGS REVIEWED (AMOS 2:4-8)

- Amos identified various sins of Judah and Israel that were cause for them to experience God's judgment.

2. HISTORY RELIVED (AMOS 2:9-11)

- Through the prophet Amos, God reminded Israel and Judah of His actions on their behalf, especially providing them the promised land.
- He noted that Israel was committing the very crimes of the Amorites, whom God had removed from the promised land to make way for the Israelites.
- Amos also pointed to God providing prophets so the people would know His expectations and serve Him alone.

3. JUDGMENT RECKONED (AMOS 2:12-16)

- Amos stated that Israel and Judah chose to ignore God's prophets, trying to silence them. God's judgment would come in response.
- Amos presented seven images that indicated God's judgment would be complete and applied to all.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

God's judgment awaits all who ignore Him and His truth.

- God expects His people to live lives of obedience that reflect His character.
- Believers should recount God's grace in their lives, responding with obedience.
- Only through God's grace will a person escape His complete judgment.

MEMORY VERSE

Amos 1:2

KEY DOCTRINE

The Scripture

The Bible reveals the principles by which God judges us.
(See Deut. 17:19; Heb. 4:12.)



ENGAGE

What are some reasons drivers ignore their dashboard warnings? What are some reasons Christians ignore God's warnings? (PSG, p. 10)

- Automobiles have all kinds of warning lights built into the dash.
- The minor prophets acted as "dashboard lights" for the people of Israel and Judah. They signaled warnings of impending judgment, but it was up to the people to listen to God.

EXPLORE

1. WRONGS REVIEWED (AMOS 2:4-8)

Why should the people of God live to a higher moral standard than others? (PSG, p. 13)

- The people of Judah had returned to their old way of life prior to their knowledge of God. They were living like the pagan nations around them and reverting to a way of life that the covenant people of God should not have embraced.
- The Israelites, like Christians today, were held to a higher moral standard of conduct because they had heard and received the Word of God.

What are the dangers of allowing culture to decide what is right and wrong? (PSG, p. 14)

- A true measure of a person is how they treat the weaker or less powerful, and Israel failed that test.
- Amos sounded the warning alarm to Israel; these wrongs would not go unpunished.

2. HISTORY RELIVED (AMOS 2:9-11)

How does God's providing messengers and examples in history point to His grace? (PSG, p. 16)

- A quick look at the history of Israel revealed that God was full of grace and awaited Israel's repentance to receive the grace they needed to avoid further judgment for their sins.
- Even though they were committing many of the same sins as the nations around them, they should have known better than others how God would respond to them with His grace.
- Likewise, Christians should recount God's gracious activity in their lives and respond with obedience rather than disobedience. Seeing God's grace should not make one want to sin more but less.

Bonus: How do these activities initiated by God encourage His people to respond?

3. JUDGMENT RECKONED (AMOS 2:12-16)

Bonus: What are ways God uses to notify us that our character is out of line with His character? Which of these are most effective? Which do we tend to resist?

- The Israelites' disregard of God was evident. The Nazirites had become symbolic, burdensome nags to a people who were determined to ignore God. Consequently, Israel sought to eliminate the nuisance of the Nazirites by coercing them to drink wine, thus breaking their vow to God. Then the Israelites would no longer have to face the accusations of devoted lives in their midst.
- The people thought by closing the mouths of the prophets they could neglect the consequences of their own sin. However, God did not send the prophets to initiate judgment against Israel but to warn them of impending judgment.

What things do people trust in today to avoid God's judgment? (PSG, p. 17) Bonus: How do these things give a false sense of security?

- Amos presented seven images indicating God's judgment would be complete and applied to all.
- God had warned His people by His prophets. This should have caused them to realize God is full of grace and desires to make people right with Himself.
- However, they ignored His message and instead began to store up God's judgment that would eventually be poured out upon them when the Assyrians overtook Samaria in 722 BC, about thirty years after the prophet Amos preached.

CHALLENGE

Discuss as a group the role the group plays in helping each other listen to God and His truth.

What actions might help the group support each other to a greater degree when it comes to heeding God's Word? (PSG, p. 18)

Encourage individuals to reflect on this question in response to the group time:

If Amos had been addressing you, what wrongs would be listed and what history recounted of God acting on your behalf? How do each of the things identified serve as motivation to follow Him and His truth? What actions do you need to take considering what you identified? (PSG, p. 18)



BONUS IDEAS

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, p. 14)

Review cross reference verses to gain insight.

Memorize Amos 1:2 in your preferred Bible translation. Then review the following verses that communicate a similar message: Isaiah 42:13; Jeremiah 25:30; Hosea 11:10; and Joel 3:16. Note the similar words and phrases. How does each passage give us a different view of God's impending judgment? How would you summarize the teaching of these passages in one sentence?

To conclude the group time, lead the group to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 14). Explain that Amos 1:2 serves as a summary of the message to be delivered by Amos. After creating a summary of the teaching of the listed passages as suggested, call attention to the three summary statements under each outline point on page 18 of the PSG and the session summary statement under the title on page 10. Guide the group to identify how the three

outline statements relate to the session summary statement and the summary developed in the Bible Skill activity. Emphasize that the Bible consistently points to judgment awaiting those who ignore God and His grace.

OPTION: BRAINSTORM

Gather a board or large sheet of paper and markers.

Discuss as a group the role the group can play in helping each other listen to God and His truth. Write responses on the board. Discuss: *What actions might help the group support each other to a greater degree when it comes to heeding God's Word?* Create a plan with specific action steps to help each other live lives of obedience that reflect God's character.



DIG DEEPER

AMOS

Amos, whose name means "burdened" or "one who is supported [by God],"¹ was a prophet who declared God's case for judgment against Israel. His ministry took place about 750 years before Jesus was born. He was a layperson, who reminded us of his lack of professional credentials in Amos 7:14-15 where he said, "I was not a prophet or the son of a prophet; rather, I was a herdsman, and I took care of sycamore figs. But the LORD took me from following the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'" Amos is another example of how God used ordinary people to carry out extraordinary tasks.

Internationally, during Amos's life there was relative peace. At home, both Israel and Judah were politically stable. When Amos began to prophesy during the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel, there was prosperity like there had been during Solomon's reign. But with prosperity came the social, moral, and religious problems that the people faced. Amos spoke God's judgment against these problems. He called on the people to be accountable to the sovereign and righteous God for their actions.

When God called Amos to his prophetic ministry, Amos spoke indictments against both Judah and Israel. He confronted them about their superficial religion, exploitation of the poor, dishonesty, immorality, and distortion of justice. Amos illuminated the people's misdeeds. He pointed out that they did not have a right relationship with God, and that God would judge them for their actions.

The people's moral corruption was rooted in their pagan worship practices as well as their unfaithfulness to the one true God. There was decay present in the society because of their perverted prosperity and self-indulgence. Yet the people mistakenly thought that the prosperity was a sign of divine favor.

The primary theme of Amos can be found in Amos 5:24: "But let justice flow like water, and righteousness, like an unfailing stream." While Amos's prophecy told of God's judgment against the people's disobedience, it also carried the hope of God's mercy and love.

1. "Amos," *Holman Illustrated Pocket Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2004), 15.