

28. Jesus in Amos

December 15, 2016

When someone mentions a prophet, what image do you have in mind? Maybe a person with a long robe with holy look on his or her face. If it is a man, he might have a beard and mustache and piercing eyes that seem to be looking right through your heart. And he probably has been a prophet all his life.

But Amos was different – totally different. Most people would say he wasn't cut out for the job. After all, he was a shepherd and a fig picker, he was used to working with his hands, not delivering messages from heaven. By his own admission, Amos had no formal training for this daunting task as a prophet from God.

However, Amos possessed the most important qualification – a call of God. In our culture, the people with human credentials are considered more important than the others with the call of God. How ungodly and humanistic that is!

So Amos who led flocks of his wandering sheep went to the wandering sheep of Israel, confronting them with their empty religion, the oppression of the poor, and total disregard for God's commands. I don't believe that time has diminished the power of the Word of God that came out of Amos' mouth, nor relevance.

Since Amos was a contemporary of Jonah, Hosea, and Micah and his message was pretty much similar as other minor prophets.

Though Amos resided in Judah, his message was directed primarily to the northern kingdom, Israel. Crossing tribal boundaries to pronounce judgment, no doubt, made him even more unpopular than the average prophet. Yet Amos persisted and confronted the sinful nation, tugging around God's weighty message and living up to the Hebrew meaning of his name – "Burden-Bearer."

During Amos' day, both Israel and Judah enjoyed a time of great power and prosperity. The threat from surrounding enemies was at an all time low. The rich people of Amos' day enjoyed a lazy, indulgent lifestyle, while the poor became targets for legal and economic exploitation. Meanwhile, their religious activities flourished. The people thronged to the shrines for the yearly festivals, enthusiastically offering their sacrifices which were pretty much leftovers or the ones they didn't want. They steadfastly believed that their God was with them, and considered themselves immune to disaster much like today's Americans believe that God owes something great to them.

By the way, the repeating phrase in this Book is "*for three transgressions... and for four.*" It is a Hebrew style poetic element used in Scripture to convey fullness. The Book is mainly a blistering declaration of God's impending judgment on Israel and the world. In fact, Amos uses a phrase for eschatological judgment – "the day of the Lord" in Amos 5:18–20, that the NT repeatedly echoes.

However, this judgment is expressed in poetry styles to many readers. And this raises the question: why did God give us the Book of Amos in poetic style rather than in legal arguments? After all, in our day, poetry is often the language of love, not law-suit. But the benefit of using poetic language allows the prophet to relay the divine anger, disdain, and lament, at the same time grounded in love.

A. JESUS IN THE PRESSURE OF MINISTRY

Amos 3:7-8 Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets. 8 A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?

As we keep this portion in context, the prophet spoke of the coming judgment upon Israel. God revealed its secret to His servant prophets, and they diligently prophesied for years and their prophecies came true. Yet the Israelis didn't repent most of the time. The pressure of ministry and the urgency of ministry were evident to both Jesus and Amos.

John 9:4 I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

Before we move on to the next point, we must keep in mind that v7 does not mean that the Lord could do nothing without revealing His secret intention to a prophet first as if He needed to get the prophet's permission. A case in point can be seen in Ephesians 3:5-6:

Ephesians 3:5-6 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel

The method of the salvation of mankind was the best kept secret in the universe. No angels, no prophets knew. Only the Triune Godheads.

B. JESUS IN THE TEACHING AGAINST COVETOUSNESS

Amos 6:4-6 Who lie on beds of ivory, Stretch out on your couches, Eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall; 5 Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, And invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; 6 Who drink wine from bowls, And anoint yourselves with the best ointments, But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

At the beginning of this study, I mentioned to you that the ancient Israelis during the time of Amos were enjoying themselves in the lap of luxury while the poor couldn't even make ends meet. Jesus talked about the same point to the Israeli people.

Luke 12:15-21 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

This brings a very important point which was taken out of context by many self-proclaimed Christians who do not or choose not to understand the difference between the true Gospel and their social Gospel. Both of them are important. The true Gospel balances God's holiness, judgment, love, mercy, and the exclusive way of salvation through Jesus Christ, but the social Gospel ignores everything except the love and mercy of God. The people in the denominations, such as United Methodists and Episcopalians subscribe to this unbalanced theology. They help homeless, AIDS patients, and other good social works, while they don't practice what the Bible tells

them to do. In other words, their doctrine has the smell and the look of Christianity, but in reality it is not the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

C. JESUS IN THE RESISTANCE BY THE PRIESTS

Amos 7:10-13 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. 11 For thus Amos has said: 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, And Israel shall surely be led away captive From their own land.' " 12 Then Amaziah said to Amos: "Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, And there prophesy. 13 But never again prophesy at Bethel, For it is the king's sanctuary, And it is the royal residence."

God warns Amos of Israel's coming judgment through five visions He does not bring about the first two, locusts and fire, thanks to Amos intercessory pleading. The third vision, however, the plumb line, pictures God as measuring the sins of Israel against His perfect standards and finding the nation woefully crooked.

Amaziah who was a priest under Jeroboam II confronted Amos with his false religion. The most fierce enemies of Jesus Christ while He was on earth were the priests, Pharisees, and Sadducees. While we are obedient to the Lord, it is not unusual to be confronted by the people who follow false doctrines and religions. In their minds, they are serving the Lord.

You remember our two missionary groups – Alex Piagetti of "For the Children" ministry in Brazil and Ken VanKirk, a medical missionary in the inland Mexico. They both often face the oppression and persecution from the Catholic priests in their regions. Our own brother Herb Perez also faces the Catholic population resistance in the Nogales area.

D. JESUS IN THE HUMBLE BACKGROUND

Amos 7:14-15 Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: "I was no prophet, Nor was I a son of a prophet, But I was a sheepbreeder And a tender of sycamore fruit. 15 Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, And the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.'

Like the Messiah, Jesus, the prophet Amos didn't have any blaring background. He was not a graduate of a seminary or Bible college. He was not from the lineage of one of the well-known priests' families. Amos' resume stops at showing "rancher and farmer," no one would be impressed with it. Just appointed by God.

For our Savior, even one of His disciples, Nathaniel said,

John 1:46 And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Our Lord's birth place would not gather up any VIPs around. Indulge me to describe the birth place of our savior in a few words:

As Joseph opened the gate of the stable, he could hear the animals' discordant note of the intrusion. The air was heavy with the smell and humidity. Joseph's small oil lamp caused the shadows to dance on the walls. A disquieting place for a young woman to have a childbirth. Far from home. Far from family. Far from what the Messiah's introduction to the world should be. A feeding trough for a crib. Hay as a mattress. Swaddling clothes to wrap God in human form. Hardly appropriate for humanity, let alone divinity. With all these inconveniences and low quality accommodations, the Messiah has arrived without halos and glowing fanfare.

E. JESUS IN THE TABERNACLE

Amos 9:11-12 "On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old 12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name," Says the Lord who does this thing.

This prophecy has dual meanings – the one in the near future, the other in the distant future. Amos, inspired by the Holy Spirit, used the words "*the tabernacle of David*" instead of "the temple." You may say, "So what?"

If you could read the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the OT, it says, "skenaos." All of a sudden, some of you guys are thinking about one particular verse in the Book of John:

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

During the OT's tabernacle period, the Lord dwelled among His people in the wilderness. Right smack dab in the middle of the Israeli camp which had a formation of the cross due to the population of three tribes of each direction, north, south, east, and west. But during the time of the NT, Christ Himself made His presence in the midst of people physically. If you look into a Greek word of "dwelt" of John 1:14, it also is "skenaos". It is no wonder, one of Christ's name is "Immanuel" – God with us.

So, when Amos was prophesying in these two verses, without knowing, he was prophesying about the Messiah's incarnation, death, resurrection, and the eternal kingship of our Lord Jesus.