

# The Lion's Consuming Roar

A Sermon on Amos 1-2

by

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## 1. Introduction: The Lion's Roar of Judgment (1:1-2)

### a. *Background of the prophet (v.1).*

- i. Amos is a shepherd and tender of sycamore figs.
  1. He is not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, meaning that he was not a prophet by profession, born from the line of the prophets.
  2. Rather, he was specifically called out from his occupation as an untrained farmer to pronounce God's judgment upon the northern kingdom.
- ii. His ministry took place in during the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II.
  1. There is also mention of an earthquake, which we don't have much information on other than it is also mentioned in Zech. 14:5.
  2. However, everyone reading of this prophecy would have known what he was referring to.

### b. *The Lord roars from Zion (v. 2).*

- i. This theme characterizes the whole book of Amos, depicting Yahweh as the lion who lets out a deafening roar just before it devours its prey.
- ii. All the land would mourn, from the low regions of the shepherd's pastures to the height of Mt. Carmel.

## 2. God's Righteous Judgment Against Those Who Afflict His People (1:3-1:12)

### a. *Before we get into the particulars of what that means for the nations, I want to draw your attention to the structure of the passage.*

- i. Each section here follows the same exact pattern.
  1. In v.3 you'll see there's an introductory declaration of judgment from the Lord.

- a. He says that for three offenses of Damascus, and for four, the Lord will not revoke its punishment.
    - i. The prophet connects these cities to each nation.
    - ii. These pronouncements upon the major cities are representative of judgment on the whole nation.
  - b. Yet you'll notice he only lists one particular offense that brings judgment upon them.
    - i. The idea is that this sin is the straw that broke the camel's back and sealed their fate, so to speak.
    - ii. Each of them has a particularly flagrant sin which provokes God to action—but notice, it is an action which will not be revoked, meaning it cannot be undone.
2. So what is this sin? For Damascus, it is because they threshed Gilead with iron sledges.
- a. We'll touch on that more in a moment.
  - b. For now, I just want you to see the pattern of judgment in these eight nations.
    - i. You have the declaration from the Lord.
    - ii. You have a particular city and nation the Lord is focusing on.
    - iii. You then have the decree of an irrevocable judgment.
    - iv. You have the particular flagrant sin which drew His ire.
    - v. Then vv. 4-5, you see what that judgment upon them will be.
- ii. Yet I don't want you to miss what is unfolding throughout these two chapters.
- 1. Don't become so focused on the individual nations that you miss the forest for the trees.
    - a. The nation that has particularly caught the ire of God is Israel.
    - b. Everything in these two chapters is building towards this point, where God's gaze falls upon His own people and more

particularly the ten tribes who split off from Judah and went North.

2. God is circling around the nations in His judgment, moving from region to region, picking them off one by one.
  - a. First go the nations who cursed Israel rather than blessed them.
  - b. Second go the nations who, though distant relatives of Israel, did not care for bonds of blood nor treaties and oaths sworn from their fathers.
  - c. Third goes that nation Judah, that lived by lies, rejecting the Lord's Law and His true prophets.
  - d. Fourth then goes that nation Israel, unwittingly watching the Lion devour its prey, one by one, closing in that circle, stalking His final prey.
  - e. From this point forward, we're going to see four reasons God will pour out His judgment.
    - i. But I don't want you to think of this with just the nations in mind—I want you to ask yourself: am I described here? Am I right with God? Is God on "my side"?
    - ii. Everything hinges on the answer to those questions.
- b. *This first group of those who fall under the judgment of God are those who are an enemy to God's people.*
  - i. This is all born out of the promise to Abraham; that those who bless Israel shall be blessed and those who curse Israel shall be cursed.
    1. In one sense, all eight of the nations fall under this indictment.
    2. Yet in particular here, we find Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, and Edom under the gaze of the Lion.
  - ii. Damascus receives their irrevocable judgment because they threshed Gilead with iron sledges (v.3).
    1. One of the ways you would separate the seed from the stalk would be with a sledge, which had iron spikes driven through them to make the job easier.

- a. What's being described here is that Damascus came to Gilead and beat them with these sledges as if they were beating grain.
    - b. This can only be described as shamelessly savage and barbaric behavior.
  - 2. Yet notice the result of this incredibly wicked and barbaric behavior in v. 4; the Lord Himself will come in fiery judgment and consume their defenses.
    - a. Though the nation of Assyria would become the arm of God's judgment, God Himself takes ownership of their destruction
    - b. The judgment roar of the Lion has gone forth and it will not be returned; God has cursed those who curse Israel.
- iii. Gaza and Tyre are next to receive their irrevocable judgment because they sent an entire population into exile and slavery (v. 6)
  - 1. Gaza was the capitol city of the Philistines and Tyre was the capital city of the Phoenicians.
    - a. Both regions commit the same egregious acts against Israel; they took captives and sold them into slavery.
    - b. In this, they simply looked upon people as a commodity—as a product to be sold—rather than an Image Bearer.
  - 2. As a result, both Gaza and Tyre will have their walls and citadels burned and destroyed when the Assyrians come.
    - a. What is unique to the Philistines is that the Lord promises to hunt them down even to the remnant.
    - b. Once again, a people bent on being a cursing to Israel would bear the full weight of God's curse on them.
- iv. Edom receives judgment because they pursued their brother with the sword.
  - 1. The first three regions to be consumed in judgment are foreign nations, but now the prophet dials in his focus towards blood-relatives of Israel.
    - a. Edom is called the brother of Israel because of their relation to Jacob and Esau, who were brothers.
    - b. We see here that the reason for judgment upon Edom is listed in v. 11.

2. Again, the judgment Edom would receive here is the same as that of the Phoenicians.
  - a. Their defenses would come to crumble and they would find themselves at the mercy of a God who would give them no mercy.
  - b. This is truly where I believe you can see the devastation of sin's consequences, but also, what comes from a heart that refuses to forgive.
- v. The singular thread which ties these four regions together is that they were a curse to Israel rather than a blessing.
  1. This shows us something incredibly important about the character and nature of God in His judgment upon people.
    - a. It shows us that God is indeed faithful to His promise to Abraham, and that we can likewise trust His promises.
    - b. Yet more importantly, it demonstrates for us that God will not tolerate those who harm His people.
  2. He will not allow His children to suffer harm and stand by idly.
    - a. He will execute His wrath on those who pour out vileness and hatred upon His children.
    - b. To put it in the clearest of terms possible: God will take vengeance when His children are afflicted.

### **3. God's Righteous Judgment Against Those Who Desecrate Life and Death (1:13-2:3)**

- a. *Ammon is first identified in vv. 13-15 for their desecration of life.*
  - i. We find the sin that drew the judgment of God in v. 13; they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to enlarge their borders.
    1. What you have here is very simply described and doesn't require much explanation.
      - a. They killed the most vulnerable people in society: women and children.
      - b. They had a particularly evil kind of cruelty that disregarded the most basic sense of dignity.

2. If they ripped open the bellies of pregnant women to brutally kill them and their children, one can imagine what they did to everyone else in their brutal conquest.
  - a. Their cruelty towards the weakest and most vulnerable members of society characterizes their actions toward the whole.
  - b. And this is particularly what makes their actions so evil: they traded that which was given worth far above and beyond any other created thing for wealth.
- ii. At the heart of their actions is a complete disdain for life; a complete hatred of an Image Bearer, simply for the cause of imperialism.
  1. In our own society, things are not much different with the practice of abortion and abortifacients.
    - a. While our culture now refrains from ripping open the uterus of pregnant women, they still kill infants at an alarming rate.
    - b. They want to live in perpetual adolescence and destroy the very thing that is the most vulnerable in our world!
  2. The root issue though remains the same: it is not just a hatred of the Image-bearer; it is a hatred of the Image-Giver.
    - a. It is a hatred of God Himself which leads one to do such things and there is simply no other way to square this.
    - b. Proverbs 6:17 says that the Lord hates those whose hands shed innocent blood.
- b. *Moab is then identified in chapter two, verses 1-3, for their desecration of death itself.*
  - i. Notice now that Moab is indicted in 2:1—what did they do? They burned the bones of the Edomite king to lime.
    1. We tend to think very little of what happens to the bodies of the dead, but there is actually a profound significance given to this in these ancient cultures.
      - a. This is not referring to the practice of cremation.
      - b. To burn the bones of the Moabite king to lime meant far more than simply burning his bones.

- i. They would open his grave and remove his remains, then burn them, and then mix them with lime to make mortar or plaster for whitewashing buildings.
    - ii. It was done to humiliate the deceased and bring ultimate dishonor upon them.
  - 2. Yet this grievance went even further, as it was an assault upon the living.
    - a. Imagine someone doing this to one of your deceased loved-ones.
    - b. It would be the highest insult you could imagine to their memory and you would rightly be livid.
  - ii. Moab would be brought to judgment by the hand of the Assyrians, just like everyone else, and as a result they would be utterly crushed.
    - 1. In v. 2 we find the Lord would punish them similarly to the rest.
      - a. He would destroy their strongholds, yet they would ultimately die in the panic of battle.
      - b. The trumpet would cry out to signal war was upon them, yet they would die in confusion.
    - 2. V. 3 then shows us the judges and the leaders in their midst would also die.
      - a. All of it simply shows that their roles have been reversed.
      - b. Fear, confusion, and panic would give way to their untimely deaths; the nobles and rulers would die just as anyone else.

#### **4. God's Righteous Judgment Against Those Who Live by Lies (2:4-5)**

- a. *Judah's sin is characterized most simply as those who have rejected the truth of God's Word.*
  - i. Notice that again, Amos mentions three different offenses for what has drawn the judgment of God, or at least it seems as if that's the case.
    - 1. V. 4 first shows us that they have rejected the Law and not kept His statutes.
      - a. All this simply means is that they reject Scripture and its commands.

- b. This is also a rather widespread phenomenon in the church today when we start to think about it more.
- 2. Yet to bring this a bit closer to home—what is your knee-jerk reaction to certain parts of Scripture when you hear them?
  - a. Is it the high-handed, flagrant sins we know so well that we all tend to look at when we think of what is gross immorality?
  - b. Or perhaps you follow in suit with some of the more innocent sins we can so easily commit as Christians—the type that Jerry Bridges calls “Acceptable Sins”?
  - c. At the root of these evils, whatever they may be, is a heart that lives by lies, which is the sin of Judah.
- ii. Much like the sins of Edom, this is a list of offenses under one particular sin which characterizes the whole.
  - 1. What he means by this in particular is that they have ignored the Law and the prophets.
  - 2. Time and again God would send his prophets to Judah and they would instead heap up false prophets who would suit their itching ears.
    - a. Again, this is a particular bane to the modern church.
    - b. Yet once again, we must apply this to ourselves: do you surround yourselves with people who will point you to truth and to you take their rebuke when it comes—or do you seek to avoid it at all costs, as Judah did?
- b. *Thus, Judah’s judgment is the same as the surrounding nations.*
  - i. The Lord would likewise consume them in His fiery judgment and bring the Babylonians down upon them.
    - 1. Their citadels in Jerusalem would be burned with fire.
    - 2. God would indeed punish the evil-doer in their midst and bring a fierce and impetuous people upon them for their sins.
  - ii. They were held to greater accountability than the nations whom God did not covenant with.
    - 1. They had the Law and the prophets; they simply did not heed them nor accept their authority.



2. With their rejection of God's Law and His prophets would come a deafening roar of judgment from the Lion.
  - a. His judgment would not be pulled back.
  - b. Yet it was not ultimately fixed upon Judah.

**5. God's Righteous Judgment Against Those Who Practice Injustice (2:6-16)**

- a. *All of the former sections have been building to this point as a means to show that Israel's sins are the greatest of them all.*
  - i. Israel's sins are all of the ones we've seen thus far and more.
    1. We see this clearly with the litany of offenses drawn out in vv. 6-8.
      - a. In v. 6, they sell the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of sandals.
      - b. Israel was strictly forbidden from selling them as slaves, let alone treating them as harshly as they had been.
    2. In v. 7-8, we find another way they abused the poor and the helpless, and committed other grossly immoral deeds.
      - a. V. 7: They trampled upon the heads of the poor as they were already in the dust.
      - b. Yet it is so much more than simply taking advantage of them while they were already destitute. They diverted the way of the humble.
      - c. Then we see that fathers and sons were having intercourse with the same women.
      - d. In v. 8 we find they seize garments as a pledge, which they stretch out besides every altar.
        - i. This is a notoriously difficult phrase to interpret and part of that is due to how it is translated from the Hebrew.
        - ii. However, what I believe Amos is saying that the cloaks they could take as collateral for debt, was laid down before the altar of foreign gods so they could engage in cultic prostitution.

- ii. Yet more severe than their flagrant and open rebellion was their flagrant rejection of God's grace (vv. 9-12).
  - 1. Notice that God frames things first in His free grace given to them.  
Starting in v. 9:
    - a. It was God who destroyed the Amorite from the land of Canaan so they could come into the Promised Land.
    - b. It was God who delivered them from the Egyptians.
    - c. It was God who raised up some of their sons to be prophets and some of them to be Nazirites.
  - 2. The central theme to all three of these things is that they spurned the grace of God in their rebellion.
    - a. The Amorites, the strongest of those who dwelt in the land, were defeated by God.
    - b. Their deliverance from the Egyptians was the most prominent of these three acts of grace.
    - c. The prophets and the Nazirites were a blessing to Israel from the Lord Himself.
    - d. Yet they encouraged the Nazirites to break their vows to the Lord and silenced the prophets.
- b. As a result, Israel too would be consumed in the wrath of the roaring Lion (vv. 13-16).
  - i. In v. 13 the prophet uses his understanding as a shepherd once again to bring home the message of judgment.
    - 1. Just like a wagon becomes overladen and grinds to a halt in the ground, Israel will be crushed under the weight of judgment.
      - a. The one who seeks to run will not find refuge from God (v. 14).
      - b. The strong warrior would not win in his fight against God (v. 14).
      - c. The archers would not stand their ground against God (v. 15).
      - d. Those mounted on horseback would not escape God (v. 15).
      - e. Even the bravest of warriors would flee naked in shame on the day of Yahweh's judgment (v. 16).
    - 2. In other words: God would hunt them down.
      - a. The roar of the Lion went forth and it would not be taken back.

- b. And all Israel could do was stand and watch as nation after nation was devoured in wrath and wait for their turn.
  - ii. In all of it, the implication is that they spat in the face of God when He gave them nothing but grace.
    1. Yahweh helped them when they were a weak and needy people.
    2. In much the same way then, Yahweh would help a weak and needy people when they most needed deliverance from Israel.

## **6. Conclusion: The Lion's Roar of Judgment Shall Not Be Turned Back**

### **Small Group Questions**

1. Do you find yourself described in one of the eight nations that God brought judgment upon in the book of Amos? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever considered God's judgment like this before—that God is circling His prey (those not in Christ), day by day, until the day they must give an account?
3. We know the Lion's roar of judgment has gone forth and it will not be turned back. God has promised a Day when the living and the dead shall be judged. Who are you telling about this day of judgment to come? Are you sincerely doing everything in your power to be faithful to give them the gospel? How can we help you in this?