

GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON DAMASCUS

TEXT: AMOS 1:1-5

Introduction:

1. We started our new series in the book of Amos last week. Amos is considered the first of the writing prophets (Amos wrote about 50 years after the death of Elisha). He was a herdsman of Tekoa (1:1). Tekoa was a rugged, rural area in Judah, about six miles south of Bethlehem, and about twelve miles southeast of Jerusalem.
2. I referred last week to Scofield's four-fold division:
 - I. Judgments on the cities surrounding Palestine (1:1-2:3).
 - II. Judgments on Judah and Israel (2:4-16).
 - III. Jehovah's controversy with "the whole family" of Jacob (3:1-9:10).
 - IV. The future glory of the Davidic kingdom (9:11-15).
3. Amos prophesied in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II, while Uzziah was the king of Judah (Amos 1:1).
4. Verse 2 begins with the LORD roaring from Zion in judgment against the nations (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1). The LORD also roars against Judah (2:4) and Israel (2:6).
5. Tonight we will look at the first judgment – the LORD's judgment upon Damascus (1:2-5).

I. JUDGMENT UPON SYRIA (1:1-3).

1. Damascus is the capital city of Syria, Israel's neighbor to the northeast. Syria was always at war with Israel.
2. Every judgment begins with the same expression, "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions..." (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6).

3. “Three and four” equals seven, the number of completion or perfection, suggesting their sin had multiplied and come to the full (cf. Lev. 26:18, 21, 24).
4. The idea is that their judgment was inescapable and irrevocable.
5. How did the Syrians fill up their measure of iniquities against God and His people Israel? We are told “they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron” (1:3).
6. Gilead was the territory east of the Jordan River, belonging to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. This was an area open to attacks from Syria to the north.
7. This horrible atrocity, referred to here – the tearing and mangling of human bodies with iron threshing instruments – was perpetrated by the Syrian king Hazael of Damascus (1:3, 4).
8. This reminds us of how little things have changed over these past 3,000 years. Syria sponsors [terrorist](#) groups, such as [Hezbollah](#), [Hamas](#), [Palestinian Islamic Jihad](#), the [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine](#), and others.
9. The leaders of many of these terror groups live in Damascus.

II. GOD’S JUDGMENT UPON HAZAEL

1. Hazael was a murderer and usurper who, with savage cruelty, devastated Gilead all the way from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea (cf. II Kings 10:32, 33; 13:7).
2. God would judge Syria by sending down fire “into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad” (1:4).
3. Jeremiah 49:27 says, “And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.”
4. “Ben-hadad” means “son of Hadad.” Hadad was a Syrian idol. God judged them for their idolatry as well as for their cruelty.

5. Hazael was a sadistic murderer who grievously vexed the people of Israel. However, there were two men known as “Ben-hadad.” Amos’ prophecy could refer to either one or both. Some Bible teachers believe Amos (and Jeremiah in 49:27) is referring to the second Ben-hadad, Hazael’s son and successor.
6. The first Ben-hadad was king of Syria before Hazael, and was murdered by him. The prophet Elisha told Hazael God had revealed to him that he would murder the king and usurp the throne (II Kings 8:7-15).
7. Hazael had a son named Ben-hadad. Second Kings 13:3 says, “And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael, all their days.”
8. Notice II Kings 10:32 and 13:3 teach that God used Syria to chasten Israel. “In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel.” This is an important Biblical principle.

III. GOD’S JUDGMENT IS INESCAPABLE

1. Their punishment was irreversible, irrevocable, and inescapable. The LORD declared, “I will not turn away the punishment thereof” (1:3).
2. In addition to sending down the fiery flames of judgment, the LORD would also break the bar of Damascus (1:5). This refers to the heavy iron bar of the entrance gate of the city, signifying they would be defenseless and helpless.
3. Damascus and the king of Syria would surely fall.
4. Amos does not mention who Syria’s adversary would be, but we know this prophecy was fulfilled in 732 BC when Tiglath-pileser III, the king of Assyria, went up against Damascus and conquered the Syrians. He carried them captive to Kir (an Assyrian province on the Kir River) and slew King Rezin of Syria (Amos 1:5; cf. II Kings 16:7-9).
5. The LORD “cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven” (1:5), i.e., a valley northwest of Damascus. “...And him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden” (1:5). Beth Eden is a district near Haran, and it was a summer residence of the kings of Syria.

CONCLUSION:

1. God used the wicked Syrians to chasten Israel, and then He used the wicked Assyrians to punishing Syria.
2. Isaiah 10:5 says, “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.”

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