

1) The Lord Uses the Weak to Shame the Strong

- a. Amos was a shepherd or sheep breeder
 - i. shepherds were despised of low class
- b. Fig – pincher (“tender” of figs)
 - i. not a “trained” prophet, but blue-collar
 - ii. He seemed to be kind of migrant agricultural worker for fig-pinching is the process whereby you bruise the fruit to produce the figs, not a job for landowner, but for his workers
- c. from Tekoa, south of Jerusalem
 - i. yet prophesied to the Northern Kingdom – not his “hometown”
- d. prophesied during one of most prosperous times of Israel, restoring much of Solomon’s territory
 - i. see 2 Kings 14 for Jeroboam’s reign
 - ii. So, this is a case of the poor prophesying against the strong and powerful

2) Intro: The LORD roars from Zion and things happen!

- a. God rules over all the earth (note that he roars from Zion, but judges the surrounding nations who do not worship or acknowledge Him)
 - i. The LORD seems completely unconcerned of whom others worship, He moves and proclaims as the One who rules them
 - ii. Behold the mighty mono-theism of Amos
- b. God's roar is mighty
 1. drying up pastures
 2. melting the top of Mt. Carmel
 - (a) May indicate, given the general message of the oracle, that God holds success and prosperity in His hand
 - (b) Mt. Carmel is where Elijah was sent fire from heaven to prove the LORD’s power over the Baals (1 Kings 18)

3) God Expects Righteousness and Judges the Nations for Their Cruelty

- a. repetitive use of “three transgressions and for four”
 - i. indicative of many repetitive sins
 1. most likely a stubborn persistence, pursuit, delight in such sins
 2. An overwhelmingly inappropriate cruelty and disregard for life
 - ii. shows also the patience of God
 1. I waited for repentance not once, not twice, not three times
 2. God is slow to judge, not quick to judge, and is quick to compassion, which is exactly why He is judging here: the peoples were very slow to compassion
- b. A single sin is listed for every nation (interestingly, except for Judah and Israel, where many more are listed)
 - i. These sins listed are all specifically categorized as sins against people, the revelation of which is known to all people as being evil (even Darwinists, surprisingly)
 - ii. These nations are the neighbors of Israel, the surrounding nations immediately bordering Israel
 - iii. They are organized into three groups of two each according to particular natures of their crimes against others
- c. Nations of Barbaric Cruelty
 - i. Syria (Damascus is the capitol) (north)
 1. Sin:
 - a) threshed Gilead with iron
 - i. may be literal (torture)
 - ii. may be figurative (crushed to dust)
 - b) barbaric toward the Gileadites in violent hatred and a desire to utterly destroy God's people through sheer power and violence (also superior technology of iron implements)
 2. Judgment:

- a) send fire to consume King's house
 - b) destroy the fortresses built
 - i. nothing can withstand God's power
 - ii. we deceive ourselves into thinking that we can hold back God's hand (deceitfulness of sin and self, man making himself God and reimagining God into man)
 - c) keep your people from the "valley of wickedness"
 - i. Syrians were known to worship in valleys instead of high places (such as the Canaanites)
 - d) keep the king (scepter) from the "house of pleasure and delight"
 - i. suffering is coming and a destruction of that which he finds pleasure in now
 - ii. "pleasure" is the word "Eden" - interesting
 - e) people would be exiled to Kir
 - i. 2 Kings 16:9 - Assyria fulfills
- ii. Philistia (Gaza capitol) (west):
1. Sin: carried away entire population of God's people to sell to its enemies
 - a) seems to show the desire to completely eradicate the name of Israel, an utter hatred and contempt for God's people and the desire to annihilate them
 2. Judgment:
 - a) fire upon your capitol and strongholds
 - b) cut off your strongest people and cut off your king from his people
 - c) ultimately the entire nation will perish in the same way that they desired the utter destruction of God's people, so God would do to them
- d. Nations of Betraying Cruelty
- i. Phoenicia (Tyre) (west):
1. Sin: similar to Gaza but with a particular betrayal of broken promise of brotherhood
 - a) treaty of brotherhood (1 Kings 9:13) between Solomon and Hiram (1 Kings 5:12) broken when Israel fled to Tyre for shelter but was turned over to the Edomites
 - b) Also, Hiram sent a skilled craftsman and resources (cedar, etc.) to help Solomon build the Temple
 - c) Psalm 83
 - d) Ezekiel 26
 2. Judgment: more fire to consume city
- ii. Edom (south):
1. In the pattern of "three, and four", this was the fourth nation, which would have indicated to Amos' hearers that this was the greatest judgment, the worst nation
 2. Sin: betrayal of brotherhood by pursuing his destruction persistently
 - a) Edom - from Esau, brother of Jacob
 - b) continual enemy of Israel
 - i. see Numbers 20:18 where Edom took up arms against Israel to keep them from passing through Edom as they returned from Egypt (Exodus)
 - c) "stifled compassion" - persistent hatred
 - a. continual rage toward God's people
 3. Judgment: Teman and Bozrah destroyed by fire
 - a) modern Jordan area, unknown location
 - b) Teman noted for its wisdom, Job's friend Eliphaz was a Temanite
- e. Nations of Cowardly Cruelty
- i. Ammon (East): descendants of incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughter
1. animosity between Israel and Ammon/Moab longstanding (see 1 Samuel 11 and Nehemiah 2:10)
 2. important to note also that there were Ammonite believers (Zelek was one of David's 30 mighty men)

3. Sin: Ripped open pregnant women of Gilead to further their kingdom
 - a) This is the sin of cruelty against the weak, thus the cowardice and incredible arrogant hatred exhibited in this heinous act
 - b) Cruelty against future generation
 - c) Again, desire to eliminate the furthering generation of God's people and eradicate them from the land...perversely (Jeremiah 49:1-2 implies that this lack of heirs was the reason that Ammon seized Gilead)

4. Judgment: destruction of war, violent tempests upon the day of battle, royalty exiled, the entire family

- ii. Moab (East): see Ammon for same descent
 1. Ruth was of Moab and in the lineage of Jesus

 2. Sin: burned the bones of the King of Edom to Lim
 - a) Why is this a problem when Edom is judged above?
 - a. because only God judges, and Deut. 23:7 states that Edom is a brother to Israel and is not to be hated.
 - b) Cruelty such as the hatred that seeks to utterly destroy and flaunt victory with horror
 - c) Cruelty against the helpless, thus cowardice, and a sin against the past, just as Ammon's was against the future: utter hatred and arrogance

 3. Judgment: death to Moab through war and the terror of the trumpet and fear of war cries and its judge who declared such atrocity. There is a greater Judge who is now judging

4) To Whom Much is Given, Much is Expected

- a. God has greater expectations for those that know of His grace and of His tremendous mercy
 - i. This is not merely law, although it is reflected in it, but rather is the same as any exclusive relationship
 - ii. I have greater expectations for Katie's love of me than for anyone else...sin is a very personal act of betrayal against God
 - iii. Thus, we have Judah and Israel singled out as worth of judgment as well

- b. Judah: Israel's immediate neighbor to the south and brother
 - i. Since Amos has altered the "three, for four" formula by continuing to list nations, we come to the 7th nation listed, a number that indicated fullness (in this case, of judgment), so we would assume that Israel would have expected this judgment to the fullest judgment
 - ii. Following the "three transgressions, for four" formula, we have only seen one sin listed for the previous nations (a break from the normal pattern), but here we have three sins listed to indicate a greater degree of sin
 1. Sin: rejected the Law of the LORD, walked in unbelieving disobedience like their fathers
 - (a) Not necessarily cruelty like those listed above (although there is biblical record of such cruelty perpetrated by Israel, (see David in 2 Samuel 12:31)
 - (b) The greater sin for Judah was the rejection of God as God, of idolatry and thus failure to lovingly obey His Law
 - (c) This is seen as more heinous, hence the 3-peat and the 7th nation listed
 - a) How could this be? How could these sins be worse than tearing babies out of pregnant women?
 - b) It comes down to a basic principle: "To whom much has been given, much will be required." (Luke 12:48)
 - i. Having the grace of God revealed to them, they are expected to respond in like kind to others
 - ii. Wait and see the reasons for God's powerful response to Israel: They know His gracious work, yet turned away from it and hated others.

2. Judgment: fire to devour Jerusalem
 - a) Siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, later destruction by Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar)
3. But, Amos has a surprise...there is another alteration of the pattern, which would really stick out to his hearers: there is an 8th nation, a 2nd set of "three, and four": the greatest judgment is reserved for an 8th nation: Israel

c. Israel: The greatest enumeration and explanation of sins reserved for Israel

- i. Following the "three transgressions, for four" formula, we finally the fullness given with four sins listed, and the fullness of sin and the fullness of judgment is reserved for Israel
- ii. Sin: Sins against God and against neighbor
 1. Social Injustice against the poor
 - (a) Powerful people prospering off the poor
 - (b) Money and goods were god
 - (c) Hardness of heart toward the afflicted, unconcern, no compassion
 2. Sexual Sins
 - (a) Father and son sleep with the same girl
 - (b) Arrogance, unashamed
 - (c) Sexual sins profane God's holy name
 3. Empty Religion: brazenly sinning in God's presence
 - (a) Come to worship bringing their sinful spoils
 - (b) Participating in the ritual and the celebrations with "dirty money" and "stolen goods"
 - a) Cloaks and sandals were used as collateral for loans, but could not be kept overnight, according to the Law
 - b) This shows blatant disregard for God (by the altar) and for the weaker person
- iii. Reminder of God's Previous Graces Make Their Sin Especially Heinous
 1. When we have been given the revelation of the goodness and the beauty of God and then choose to walk in opposition to Him, it is a greater sin than the cruelty of the nations, the barbarism of unregenerate world for it is particular betrayal of Him
 2. All sin of the Church is betrayal of the Gracious God
 3. "It was I who..." says the LORD
 4. Yet they purposefully silenced the prophets and forced godly vows to be broken (Nazirites)
- iv. Judgment
 1. God will squeeze them down, crush them under weight, oppress them for their oppression
 2. Nobody shall escape in that day, fleeing with nothing of what they have stolen from the poor and the oppressed

5) Remember the Tremendous Grace of God in the Gospel

- a. The power and motivation to walk in the ways of the LORD and not become ensnared by the idols of our hearts and of our culture is to reflect, reminisce, recall, remember the grace of God
 - i. Hebrews 12:1-2 (really, the entire section re: suffering in a struggle against sin)
 - ii. It is when we "forget" in our hearts the truth of this grace that we cease loving God with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength and cease to love our neighbor as ourselves (the root sin of Israel...and of us)
- b. What are we to do?
 - i. Fix your eyes on Jesus!!
 1. Take your eyes off of the lesser things and place them on the heavenly things, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (Col 3:1-4)
 2. Seek Him, Abide in Him, Speak to Him, Listen to Him, Commune with Him
 - ii. Reflect on His Promises in the Light of Our Failures
 1. I am complete in Christ, sin no longer masters me for I have His Holy Spirit given to me
 2. I am a child of God, and I want to live like my Father who loves me and my Savior who gave Himself for me
 3. I have been forgiven much from the Almighty God, I can forgive others and love the weak