

## Love Thy Neighbor

Lessons from Amos

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This is in regard to the book of Amos, and the things that take place there. Amos certainly applies to the society of Israel, prior to the calamity that was about to befall them. It was written with all of its correction of the nations around them, and the listing of events that were about to descend upon Judah and upon Israel. The book of Amos applies to us as well, to all of Judah and Israel today, and we can see the applications starting to take place.

I would like to start out today with going through the highlights, as found in the *Expositor's Commentary*, that we might get an overview of what produced their society, and the society that we find ourselves in right at this time, and what indeed we might expect to befall us in the near future.

I am quoting now from the *Expositor's Commentary*:

In many ways the 8th century was unique in the history of Judah and Israel. Israel had great difficulties. Israel the northern kingdom was toppled from economic prosperity, and international influence to virtual subjection by a foreign power. This time also witnessed the near collapse of Judah, averted only by the steadying hand of King Hezekiah who could do no more than to slow Judah's progress into certain ruin. But the dawn of the 8th century brought new hope to Israel and Judah. Israel's subjection to Damascus ended abruptly when the Assyrians crushed Damascus in 1802 BC and the internal difficulties that had plagued Judah also ended with Uzziah's ascension to the throne. The conquest of Damascus and the quiescence of Assyria coupled with the brilliant leadership of Uzziah and Jeroboam brought Judah and Israel to heights of prominence second only to Solomon's golden age.

They were really wealthy.

I could not help, brethren, to think of our World War II victory over Germany and Japan, and after that how we blossomed forward here in technology, wealth, and pleasures, to new heights. But with the new heights came the same problems that came to Israel.

Back to *Expositor's* again:

They prospered financially, but at the same time they expanded their borders. But as their economic well-being and nationalistic strength continued to foster, their security and internal decay was eating away at their vitals. It was primarily moral, because it involved the basic violation of the covenant established by God at Sinai.

The covenant that they violated is the same covenant that we are violating in this country. Love and loyalty toward God and His commandments, and obedience and love toward our fellow man. Then, as it is now in this generation, a syncretistic religion was produced to where the people had no idea who their real God was, nor did they really care if they were filled to the brim with worldly goods and pleasure.

Back to *Expositor's* again:

The erosion of Israel's social structure showed itself primarily in the cleavage between the rich and the poor. The improved economic conditions in Israel led to an increase of the wealthy, who not only neglected the poor, but used them to increase their own wealth. The social concerns inherent in the very structure of the of the law was forgotten. God's will, as it applied to the nation of Israel, was ignored.

Today, as we look at our society, we cannot help but think of Enron. The leader of Enron, in utter selfishness with a few cohorts, stole all of the retirement money from his employees. And, today, with the financial meltdown, we see top executives taking exit packages of up to two hundred million dollars, while asking the tax payers to pay for their bad decisions. They caught one top stock man, 70 years old, he had committed a 50 billion dollar Ponzi scheme, taking money from people from all over. It is just hard to believe.

As Amos is an end time book, we can see that as God corrected those nations around His people in that age, He will again correct those people at this time in the very near future.

We are going to be going through the first two chapters of Amos.

**Amos 1:1-4** The words of Amos, who was among the sheep breeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. And he said: "The LORD roars from Zion, and utters His voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers." Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with implements of iron. But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad.

Damascus was a major city in the nation of Syria, and is punished for threshing Israel with sledges of iron. Underneath the sledge it had iron sticking out and it was used to thresh and to work with the crops and the grain. They drove over the soldiers to destroy them. Thus God is going to destroy the nation as it shows the vehemence and terrible hatred shown by Damascus. Now this is something for us to remember.

**Amos 1:6-7** Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they took captive the whole captivity to deliver them up to Edom. But I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, which shall devour its palaces."

The Philistines lived in five cities, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath and Gaza. The crime that they will be punished for was enslavement. The slaves were taken to Edom. Mr. Armstrong always felt that Turkey was Edom.

Amos indicates that whole communities were taken away, and their punishment was tremendous destruction.

**Amos 1:9-10** Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom,

and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood. But I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre, which shall devour its palaces."

In this case, Tyre was north of Israel, and they sold unto Edom. Edom must have had a tremendous slave business. In doing so, they disregarded the treaty of brotherhood made between Solomon and Hiram the King of Tyre. Tyre was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, and later it was totally destroyed by Alexander in 332.

**Amos 1:11-12** Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity; his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever. But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah."

Edom was next on God's list. Edom lay to the south east of the southern tip of the Dead Sea, and it was one of the three trans-Jordan kingdoms, that included Moab and Ammon. Edom's crime was that he pursued his brother, and his anger never diminished, but raged continually. God hates this. Edom or Esau was the twin brother of Jacob, thus Edom and Israel had close ethnic ties. And yet when Israel wished to pass on their way to the Promised land through Edom, in Numbers 20:14-21, paying them for whatever, Edom refused them, and came out against them with a great army. Their greatest act of hate and hostility against Israel is seen in 587 BC by Nebuchadnezzar. At that time the Edomites gloated over the destruction of their enemies and hindered the escape of those fleeing, and delivered them over into the captive's hands. You can read about this in Obadiah 10-14, it is a very sad and touching story. Teman and Bozrah were to be destroyed. These two cities represented the whole country, and God was going to teach them a lesson, and it was a painful suffering lesson.

**Amos 1:13-15** Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of the people of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they ripped open the women with child in Gilead, that they might enlarge their territory. But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour its palaces, amid shouting in the day of battle, and a tempest in the day of the whirlwind. Their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together," Says the LORD.

Ammon was the next one to be viewed by God. It lay northeast of the Dead Sea, and north of Moab. Much of their land was desert, and because of this their desire was to enlarge their territory. They ripped open pregnant women in Gilead, and whatever the battle was it was a notorious event, and it produced great feelings of revulsion and hatred in what they did in the sight of man and God. Their punishment: the word war means a trumpet signaling something is going to happen, but in this instance it is the shout of the enemy on the day of battle. A sound that would terrify the people as in the enemy rushing to take the city. And as I read, their kings and officials were captured.

**Amos 2:1-3** Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime. But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth; Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting and trumpet sound. And I will cut off the judge from its midst, and slay all its princes with him," says the LORD.

Now this was not against an Israelite nation. The punishment here was on the major city of Moab. Their sin was perpetual hatred of burning non-Israelites bones in total, having a never ending hatred for that individual. It is to be noted that this sin was not against Israel, and that God noted it as reflecting a hate-filled, never ending revengeful nature.

Is there a lesson for us, and the world today, in these six examples of correction?

These nations were not given God's laws, and yet God set them aside for severe punishment. Are there examples of this kind of hatred in our world today? You bet there are. Does Iran hate Judah? You bet it does. Its neighbors Hezbollah, Syria, Hamas the military branch of the Palestinians as well. Is there hatred and killing in Pakistan? Do they hate India? Is North Korea and its plans for war a nation that God is noting for severe correction?

Brethren, this type of hatred, resulting in killing, slavery, torture, brutality, has existed on earth since Cain and Abel. Which law then, if followed, would cause this to cease? I think that this is the question that God is looking at, and I think that it is one that we should answer. Which one of God's great laws will all of these nations be held accountable to God for having broken?

In the outline of prayer given by Jesus Christ, we often say, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Do we ever stop and consider the size of this operation, the gigantic task, and the enormity of this?

This commandment that I am talking about is the key commandment to becoming a reality, and yet though we read it and agree with it, does the importance of it really sink into our thinking? This is exceedingly important before God.

**Leviticus 19:18** You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

This is the commandment that God is talking about.

**Mark 12:28-31** Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. "And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.

If this one law were to be kept, there would be peace throughout the world today. Even if everyone tried, or made an attempt to keep it, we would live in a far different world.

In the above examples, we can see Amos circling like a hawk over the people that he is addressing. Now, unknown to his listeners, who are truly pleased in what they heard so far, he is about to pounce on Judah and Israel.

**Amos 2:4-5** Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have

not kept His commandments. Their lies lead them astray, lies which their fathers followed. But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem."

Judah had been placed in a very special, special place. In this case, it was not what they had done to their neighbor, but it was in their conduct or their attitude towards God, in that there was no love toward each other, or to their neighbors. They had been placed in a very special position, and in that the truth and the law of God had been given to them specifically. They had the divine law of God that no other people had. They allowed themselves to be led astray by the false gods of this world and they worshiped them. They cast aside the holy and the wonderful law of God for filth, and they just rejected it. This was an offense to God, and it exceedingly hurt their nation and their people.

Their punishment was that Nebuchadnezzar was the instrument that totally destroyed Jerusalem, and God corrected them heavily.

These following verses show the great blessings that God had performed on behalf of Israel, and the lack of thankfulness demonstrated by them, and the great lack of love toward their neighbor and their fellow man.

**Amos 2:6** Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals."

In Nehemiah 5, we can read where God's people were sold into slavery. And though we may not specifically do the same thing, but the greedy system that we live by today has placed them in exactly that situation.

**Amos 2:7-16** Thus they pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, and pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the same girl, to defile My holy name. They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge, and drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god. "Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was as strong as the oaks; Yet I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath. Also it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. I raised up some of your sons as prophets, and some of your young men as Nazirites. Is it not so, O you children of Israel?" Says the LORD. "But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets saying, 'Do not prophesy!' "Behold, I am weighed down by you, as a cart full of sheaves is weighed down. Therefore flight shall perish from the swift, the strong shall not strengthen his power, nor shall the mighty deliver himself; He shall not stand who handles the bow, the swift of foot shall not escape, nor shall he who rides a horse deliver himself. The most courageous men of might shall flee naked in that day," says the LORD.

What He is saying, for our nation today, is that disaster is coming. It is going to be a difficult, difficult time. Because of Israel's not loving God or his neighbor, God is going to bring great punishment, in love upon His people, upon this nation.

**Amos 3:14-15** That in the day I punish Israel for their transgressions, I will also visit destruction on the altars of Bethel; And the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground. I will destroy the winter house along with the summer house; the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end," Says the LORD.

Here is where He corrects the women, the trend setters, those that push their husbands to more profit, to more wealth.

**Amos 4:1-3** Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, "Bring wine, let us drink!" The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness: "Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast into Harmon," Says the LORD.

He refers to them as cows that pushed their husbands, it is not just the men.

**Amos 4:6-8** "Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities. And lack of bread in all your places; Yet you have not returned to Me," Says the LORD. "I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, And where it did not rain the part withered. So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me," Says the LORD."

**Amos 4:12** Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

He is going to bring famine, disease, heartache and all of these things. When He says prepare to meet your God, He does not mean fast and pray to get ready to meet God; He means you are going to have to stand before God and meet Him.

Brethren, during this time there will be those that hate to speak the truth.

**Amos 5:7, 10-13** You who turn justice to wormwood, and lay righteousness to rest in the earth!" They hate the one who rebukes in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks uprightly. Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone, Yet you shall not dwell in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: afflicting the just and taking bribes; diverting the poor from justice at the gate. Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time, for it is an evil time.

The time is coming when the truth cannot be spoken, nobody is going to want to hear it. The prudent and those that have the truth just remain quiet and watch what God is doing.

**Amos 8:11-13** "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD, "That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words

of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it. "In that day the fair virgins  
And strong young men Shall faint from thirst.

The whole structure, the country that we think about as being Christian, will give up the Christianity that they have and they will go after foreign gods, and there will be no truth available. It is going to be a terrible time brethren.

When this will come to pass I do not know, but we see things starting to happen at this time. Brethren, during this time the country and the world will suffer. And though we will share in that trial, this will be a time of judgment for us in the second great commandment. This time of difficulty and trial is going to be a test for us. As it states, in Amos 7:7-8, a plumb line is going to be set to measure God's people.

God tells us that we have to love our neighbor, or He says, "Love your enemy."

**Matthew 5:43** You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

So God is saying that He is looking for us to do more than just be friendly with those that we know, but He expects us to go further.

**Luke 10:25-37** And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Something else that we can know here about the Samaritan. He did not try to convert him to his political party, try and convert him to his religion. He just saw the need, and he helped him and he took care of him, and then he went on his way. He did not even hang around for thanks. This is the example that I think we can all take note of.

Now, brethren, where is the greatest example of loving your neighbor? And in doing so what does it mean to Jesus Christ?

**Matthew 25:31-34** When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:'

Very important time! This is spoken by Jesus Christ to us today.

**Matthew 25:35-40** 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

This is how important loving your neighbor is to God, and I might add to you and me individually.

**Galatians 6:10** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

This is the rule about doing good, when we have the opportunity, and the means we are to do it. Not when it is just convenient. Hopefully, this is one of those times when we do not want to let the right hand know what the left hand is doing. We do not want to blow our trumpet and say, "Look what I have done" for then we are seeking the approval of those around us.

We are to be aware of the needs of those in the church. Those needs may be sincere heartfelt prayer, fasting, offering shelter, food, clothing, or money. All of these things may be needed in the very near future. I was talking to Kim Myers, of the Portland congregation, he was saying that car companies are closing up there. Things are happening, brethren. This is not the time to be selfish, but it is a time to share and to do the right thing.

We are to do good with wisdom and consideration, that we might be wise enough that we do not destroy our own family by our giving. We are to do good to all men, whatever race or stranger that we find in the ditch.

I was watching a YouTube presentation on the "Depression" of the late 1920s and 1930s. This lady said that they had people knock on the door asking for food, "please help me." This may well be coming to us again, and this is a time to truly stop and consider "Who is our neighbor?"

When will this come about? I do not know, but it appears to be on the horizon. But I do know that we have been given a space in time in advance to deeply consider the second great commandment that these nations and Israel have forgotten, something it would seem that Israel had never really done.

We have been given time that we might learn to love our neighbor as ourselves.