

# Old Testament Core Seminar

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18

AMOS & OBADIAH

## Introduction

Welcome back. Today we will continue with the next two Minor Prophets. Why are they called “Minor Prophets?” [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] It’s not because they are less significant than the “Major Prophets.” It’s just a term to mark them off as being shorter in length than other prophetic books. Last week we looked at Hosea and Joel and we learned about symbolism that the prophets liked to use, and about the way they pronounce God’s judgment, but always end on grace, mercy, and hope. Today, we’ll move into Amos and Obadiah, and see if we can’t expand upon what we’ve learned already.

[PRAY]

## AMOS

### Context

Let’s start in **chapter 1, verse 1**. [READ] Even though Amos is from Tekoa, which is in the South, Amos’ preaching focuses on the North. As you can see there, he is concerned with Israel. You can also see there in verse 1 the names of the kings who were currently reigning during the time of his ministry. Uzziah was in Judah, and Jeroboam II was in Israel. This puts Amos, and the writing of this book, in roughly the mid 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, only a few decades before the fall of the North. This was a time of great economic prosperity, expansion, and security for both kingdoms. Just to give you a little more perspective, Amos prophesied shortly before Isaiah did.

Redemptive-historically speaking, Amos prophesies during that time after the Kingdom has been divided, but before there is any Assyrian threat in the picture. Both North and South are both standing – and standing pretty strongly and confidently. Also, similarly to Joel I hope you’ll remember, Amos uses an historical event to embody his message. Did you notice there in the first verse that Amos prophesied two years before “the earthquake?” Well, apparently this was a pretty big earthquake. So big, that a prophet even as late as Zechariah makes mention of it, in Zechariah 14:5. More on that in just a minute.

### Theme

Here is a summary sentence for Amos:

*Yahweh is angry because His people are getting rich by oppressing their own kinsmen, and despising the righteous and His word.*

Just like in the last prophets we looked at, we will see this reoccurring theme of Yahweh’s anger because of sins, and the call to repentance lest He break out in wrath. In this particular book, Yahweh is angry about two things. One, *His own* people are acting corruptly, by

trying to get rich off the oppression of their own kinsmen. And two, He is angry because His people despise those who are righteous in their midst, and despise the word of Yahweh. For these reasons, Amos is called to preach. And what Amos is saying with the earthquake is that if the people don't repent from their sinful economic practices, Yahweh will come in judgment and shake the earth unlike *any* earthquake they've ever experienced. You can imagine how unpopular this made Amos. No one, enjoying their ill gained riches and an easy life, likes being told that they are going to be judged and that those riches and comforts are going to be ripped away from them if they don't repent. Of course the earthquake caused *some* economic and social upheaval, put nothing like what's to come. Interesting that it was only a generation after these days that the North was swept away entirely by the Assyrians. It was a swift fall from a very lofty place for Israel.

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[This outline does not need to be gone over. The class only needs to be told that it is printed in their handouts so that they could have a little guide for their own study.]

### Outline w/ Pivotal Texts

- I. Amos 1-2 – Yahweh deals with the nations, then Judah, then Israel
- II. Amos 3-4 – Yahweh deals specifically with His people, Israel
- III. Amos 5-6 – The call to repent
- IV. Amos 7-9 – Five visions

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### Theme texts

#### Amos 1-4

Though the focus is on Israel in this book, the first chapters of Amos are prophecies against the surrounding nations. You can see in **1:3** attention is on Damascus, in **1:6** Gaza, **1:9** Tyre, **1:11** Edom, **1:13** Ammon, and **2:1** Moab. Those are some of the gentile nations of Amos' day. And these are all short prophecies of destruction against those nations, because of their sins. But notice also **chapter 2, verse 4**. There begins a prophecy against Judah. And in **verse 6**, the beginning of a *long* prophecy against Israel.

With those first prophecies, the covenant people would have applauded Amos, because those nations have long been the enemies of Israel and Judah. But then Amos says "Not so fast there Israel and Judah. Your sins are not overlooked either." In fact, the prophets are often a lot more critical and condemning of the covenant people for just that reason: they are in covenant with Yahweh, and they ought to know better than the gentiles. Look at **chapter 3, verse 2**. [READ] They were supposed to be lights to the gentiles, displaying the glories of the holiness of the only true God, Yahweh. But instead, they behaved just as corruptly and immorally, and sometimes worse so.

What we learn here is that **God's election** is not a blank check to irresponsibility, loose moral standards, and presumption. Rather, God's election actually *heightens* one's responsibility to live uprightly before the LORD. Some people reject the doctrine of election because they say it undermines the Christian's responsibility to live a holy life. Well, the prophets don't think so.

They see election as a the precursor to exactly the opposite. They see the doctrine of election as something that should weigh heavily on the people's minds, as though to continually say to them "Hey! You've been called out. You've been separated. You've been set apart for a special purpose: to live holy lives in the fear of Yahweh, demonstrating His holiness to all onlookers. Fulfill your high and privileged calling! Be who you are specially called to be!" Election never leads to presumption, but great responsibility. Look at **Amos 3:2** again. [READ AGAIN]

In fact, this is the same thing we saw in Leviticus. Do you remember **Leviticus 20:26**? "You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own." Now Peter says the same thing to us in **1 Peter 1:15**, "Just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" And in **1 Peter 2:9** he says, "But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, *that* [emphasis added] you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Paul too tells us that the intended end of predestination is holiness in **Ephesians 1**, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight (vv.3f)."

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

### **Amos 2:6-12**

Let's see now why this judgment is here promised. We could look at a number of texts here, but I'll just point out a couple. **Chapter 2, verses 6-8** really captures a lot of the problem concisely. As I read these verses, notice two things: the oppression of others to get rich and the oppression of those who do strive to live upright lives. [READ] Did you hear it there? You can see the oppression of the godly again in **verse 12**. [READ] Where is the sin in making "Nazirites" drink wine? [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] You can read about Nazirites in Numbers 6. Briefly though, they were people who took a special vow of obedience to Yahweh, and part of that vow included never drinking wine. So here the people are greatly belittling Yahweh Himself by forcing people to break their promises to Him. Then of course, they have little regard for the word of Yahweh when they try to shut his prophets up. And the violent economic practices can be seen all over the book. A few examples are 4:1, 5:10f, 6:3f.

I hope that at this point Jesus' own words are ringing in everyone's ears. He himself said in **Matthew 25** that when He returns to judge the world, that judgment will be based on how we treated other people, particularly those trodden down by the world. He said "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me (v. 40)." Now, I know and I believe that justification is by faith alone. Amen! But no follower of Jesus can afford to ignore Matthew 25. In fact, I recommend that everyone read Matthew 25:31-46 this afternoon, and examine their life. Those who truly *do* have a faith that justifies, will believe those words of Jesus. What He's doing there really is preaching the same message Amos does.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

### **Amos 5-6**

However, Amos is not only about ridiculing and condemning the people. He also tells them how they can escape the coming judgment. And that way is through repentance. That's what chapters 5 and 6 are about. Look at **chapter 5:14-15**. [READ] Then there is the famous passage in **5:21-24**. [READ] And you can hear Amos' twin concerns of justice and righteousness there in that last verse.

### **Amos 9:11-15**

The rest of the book contains a series of **visions** aimed at bringing the people to repent, and have Amos crying out for mercy on behalf of everyone. I want to look at just one of those visions.

Do you remember last week how we talked about the common pattern of accusation, judgment, the call to repentance, and then mercy that the prophets often use? Well another common pattern that you can look for in the prophets is this: first Yahweh judges the nations, and then His elect covenant people. And then, as expected, **He then saves the elect** from His own wrath.<sup>1</sup> Just as we saw last week, in this reoccurring pattern as well, the prophets always end on grace and mercy. No matter how long the accusations and the pronouncements of judgment are, no matter how long the list of offending nations, the prophets always end their message with the promise of salvation. Even here in Amos, we've seen many chapters of warning and the promise of judgment. Yet, nonetheless, we'll see this book also end with hope.

Turn to **chapter 9**, and look at **verses 11-12**. [READ] By and large everything up through chapter 9, verse 10 is doom and gloom, with just a few bright spots coupled with the call to repent. But then here in verse 11 is a mighty promise! This "day" is the Day of the LORD, like we studied last week. And this "day" will see the restoration of "David's fallen tent." Does anyone know what "David's fallen tent" is? It's the exile.<sup>2</sup> It's the removal of the people of God from the land, and their loss of the Davidic king over them during that time. So what Amos is saying here is that after all the coming judgment, Yahweh *will* remember His promises of old, and the people will again taste Yahweh's covenant love. And in verse 12 we see the abundance of Yahweh's love. Look. The rebuilding of the house of David involves salvation for gentiles as well! Do you see that? That Edom is mentioned there is really a sort of index back to *all* of those nations first mentioned in the first two chapters of the book! Amos is here saying that when David's tent/house is rebuilt, people from *all* the nations of the earth will find saving shelter there! This is an awesome promise!

Then **verses 13-15** are a description of that newly created universe that will accompany this "Day of the LORD's salvation," just like we saw last week in Joel. It's the return to paradise, the return to Eden, that we've been talking about in this class since day one.

And so now the question is the same as it was last week: when is this great day of the restoration of David's dynasty, the salvation of the gentiles, and the re-creation of the universe? Well, turn to **Acts 15**. What we are about to read are the apostle James' words to an assembly

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<sup>1</sup> I'm aware that some teaching on what the "remnant" is is long overdue. But each class can only handle so much. "Remnant Theology" will be handled next week when we study Micah.

<sup>2</sup> To be more precise, this broken tent also involves the division of the people of God, the split of the Kingdom. Thus what's being prophesied here is a reuniting in the rebuilding of David's tent. Sadly, all that that means may be too much for an introductory class on the prophets. O. Palmer Robertson's book *The Christ of the Prophets* is a great resource for further study about this.

that is trying to figure out what to make of all the gentiles then currently turning in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at **verse 15**. [READ THROUGH VERSE 18] James is saying that with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, David's house is rebuilt. And now all who repent (just as Amos was preaching) and put their faith in Jesus are included this eschatological salvation.

What about the re-created universe, you ask? Well, notice that James quotes only through Amos 9:12. Amos 9:13 and following must await Jesus' *second* coming, also just as we saw in Joel. The Day of the LORD's salvation is *today*. The Day of His wrath is temporarily postponed. Again, as Jesus says in Matthew 25, when He *returns* He will judge the nations. At that time He will bring His new creation. It could be at any moment. But until then, time remains for everyone to listen to Amos' message, repent of their sins, and through faith find shelter in David's house, rebuilt by the final and greatest king, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## [TAKE QUESTIONS]

### Amos 9:14

One last point of application from Amos before we move on. Look at **chapter 5, verse 11**. [READ] Such is the end of all the vain hopes of those who pursue riches in this world. They can be taken away in a moment. But look at the vision of heaven in **9:14**. [READ] Do you hear in that language the echoes and the reversal of 5:11? The message couldn't be more clear. Let those who desire to be rich seek justice, do righteousness, and put their hopes in Christ for the reward to be had in the *coming* world, *not this one*. Again, you get the impression that Jesus was a student of Amos. He said in **Matthew 6**, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (vv. 19-21)." And Jesus *really* captures the spirit of Amos in **Matthew 19:21**, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

## [TAKE QUESTIONS]

## OBADIAH

### Context

We come now to Obadiah, which is also similar to Joel. This time the similarity lies in that, like Joel, no kings are mentioned in the book, making it difficult to date. However there is a prophet named Obadiah in 1 Kings 18. If this is the same Obadiah, then he is prophesying and writing in the mid 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, at the same time as Elijah. Granted, some say that this is not the same Obadiah, but that this book should be dated closer to, or during, the exile. However, for reasons that we don't have time to suggest right now,<sup>3</sup> I am convinced that this *is* the same Obadiah, making this book the earliest of the writing prophets.

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<sup>3</sup> Verses 10 and 11 are what cause people to say that the writing of Obadiah postdates the exile. But, the attacks of the Babylonians are not the only time that Jerusalem was in trouble, and Edom might have gloated. The events of 2 Chronicles 21:5-11 occurred during Jehoram's reign (ca. 855-840 BC). This would mean that Obadiah prophesied immediately following those events. 2 Chronicles 28:16-18 should also be considered. These events occurred somewhere around 725 BC, which might suggest that Obadiah wrote at about the time of the fall of the North. But

The redemptive-historical context is very interesting. Obadiah is unique in that he is the only prophet we've studied so far to address neither the Northern nor the Southern Kingdoms. Instead, Obadiah's prophesy is directly *entirely* toward the gentile nation of Edom. Edom is significant because their relationship with the covenant people goes a long way back. The Edomites were the descendents of Esau, who was Jacob's brother. Why is that significant? [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] From Jacob came the covenant people. That makes Edom, speaking on a national scale, Israel and Judah's cousin. But what's more important is that Edom has been an *oppressive* cousin and neighbor.<sup>4</sup>

## Theme

Hence, this book is about Yahweh's covenant commitment to defend and vindicate His people's enemies. We could simply summarize Obadiah's message like this:

*Yahweh will judge those who arrogantly mistreat His people.*

Edom has a long history of arrogantly mistreating the covenant people. You can read about it in Genesis 27:40f, Numbers 20:14-21, 1 Samuel 14, and 2 Samuel 8. And now, Yahweh's longsuffering with them has come to an end. Further though (and this is where we'll get our application), the Day of the LORD, which is a day of reckoning for all nations, is also in view here (v. 15). In the text, this makes Edom a type to symbolize all the nations of the last days, especially those who would arrogantly mistreat God's people.

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## Outline w/ Pivotal Texts

- I. Obadiah 1-9 – Coming destruction of Edom: serves as a type of the Day of the LORD
- II. Obadiah 10-14 – Reason for the coming destruction: oppression of God's people
- III. Obadiah 15-21 – Coming destruction upon all as antitype: the real Day of the LORD
  - A. Judgment vv. 15-16
  - B. Salvation vv. 17-21

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## Theme texts

### Obadiah 2-4

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the use of the word "again" in the 2 Chronicles 28 passage shows that these sort of things were recurrent over and over again, and that Obadiah may be referring to an event (or a number of events) that are not recorded in the Scriptures. Further, Jeremiah 49:7-22 supports these earlier dates in that he is prophesying the downfall of Edom, that is *then* happening, at the beginning of the South's exile. So it doesn't look like Edom joined Babylon, but were destroyed by them also. Lastly, it is early in the Masoretic Text. All these things considered, I take this to be the same Obadiah of Elijah's day, in 1 Kings 18.

<sup>4</sup> Canonically speaking, it's also interesting to point out that Amos ends with the salvation of the remnant of Edom, and Obadiah is a prophesy against Edom. That may explain why Obadiah follows Amos in the Hebrew canon.

Let's see this in the text now. Obadiah is only one chapter in length. Look at **verses 2-4**. [READ] You can hear there Obadiah's comments on the pride of their hearts. Verse 3 specifically mentions their pride, and then also their living "in the clefts of the rocks," having made their "home on the heights." Those are references to Edom's geographic location. They lived in the mountains, and their capital, Petra, was virtually impregnable. Thus they had an attitude that they were unconquerable. Do you see, they ask the question there, "Who can bring me down to the ground?" Well, in verse 4, Yahweh says that *He* will bring them down, exactly because of how loftily they regard themselves.<sup>5</sup>

### **Obadiah 10-14**

And in that arrogance, Edom oppressed God's people. Look at **verses 10-11**. [READ] As just mentioned, there are a number of examples of Edom's violence against the covenant people, so it's hard to say which exactly is being referred to here.<sup>6</sup> But it doesn't really matter. What matters is that the day of reckoning is coming. They cannot forever mistreat Yahweh's people.

### **Obadiah 15-16**

Look at **verse 15**. [READ] There's the Day of the LORD again. As you can see, it's a day of judgment for the enemies of God.

### **Obadiah 17-21**

But look also at **verse 17**. It's a day of salvation, and vindication for the once persecuted people of God. [READ]

I'm reminded again about the New Testament's teachings about Christ's return. The Day of the LORD's wrath has already come for the historic nation of Edom. They were swept away by either the Assyrians or the Babylonians. But that does not render Obadiah's message pointless for us today. For the Day of the LORD's wrath has not reached its full realization yet, because there are still those who trouble the people of God. Turn to **2 Thessalonians 1**, and let's start reading in **verse 4**. [READ THROUGH 10]. Yahweh has already visited the earth once, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. When He comes a second time, He will bring the Day of the LORD to a close once and for all. On that day, you really want to be in God's good graces. Therefore, everyone is called to repent and turn to Jesus while He still holds out the free offer of salvation. But be warned if you do. Jesus made Himself very clear in **John 15:18-20** when He said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." He also said in **Matthew 10:16** that we are sent out "as sheep in the midst of wolves." Jesus held none of the

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<sup>5</sup> The use of the word "despised" in verse 2 is an example of ironic justice in light Genesis 25:34. There Esau "despised" his birthright, and in so doing despised the covenant. He "despised" Yahweh, and so Yahweh will make his descendants "despised."

<sup>6</sup> For a few possibilities, see footnote 4.

hard truths back. If you want to follow Jesus, you *will* be persecuted. Let everyone count the cost.

But Jesus also promised that the prayers and longings of His people will not go unanswered. His people will be vindicated, as we just read in 2 Thessalonians. For all of this, however, you don't have to go to the New Testament, though the New Testament does shed a lot of light. It's all right here in Obadiah.

Until that day though, Jesus also gives us direction about how to handle our persecutors and enemies. In **Matthew 5:44** we read, "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." And Jesus also gave us the greatest example of this too when He prayed for His unjust executors while He hung on the very instrument of their injustice, the cross.

**[TAKE QUESTIONS]**

### **Conclusion**

Once again, we've learned a lot from the Minor Prophets. We've learned about sin, about wrath, and about redemption. We've learned about the Day of the LORD, about Christ's first and second comings. And we've learned about our responsibilities here in between those two advents. Next week, we'll learn even more from Jonah and Micah.

**[PRAY]**