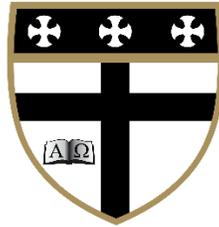


The Whitefield Seminary Papers

“Law & Religion Forum”

Volume 2, Apostolate Paper #9



A HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

“Amos’s Prophecy: A Prologue to the New Testament”¹

by

Roderick O. Ford, Litt.D., LL.D.

Copyrighted Material © 2021

¹ Roderick O. Ford, *The Apostolate Papers* (unpublished research papers, 2015 to 2022). www.roderickford.org.

“Amos’s Prophecy: A Prologue to the New Testament”²

by

Roderick O. Ford, D.Litt. (Law & Religion)



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1. God’s divine Providence over the Gentile Nations.....	7
Chapter 2. Prophecy against Judah	14
Chapter 3. Prophecy against Israel- Violence, Injustice, and Exploitation	16
Chapter 4. God’s Judgment against the Northern Kingdom of Israel	19
Chapter 5. Prophecy on the Restored Kingdom of Israel	21
Conclusion.	23

² Roderick O. Ford, *The Apostolate Papers* (unpublished research papers, 2015 to 2022). www.roderickford.org.

Introduction

The Prophet Amos lived during the 8th century, BC, and he, together with the Prophet Hosea and the Prophet Isaiah, preached during a time of material prosperity in the northern kingdom of ancient Israel.

Significantly, these prophets' exhortations were directed towards both civil and political entities— i.e., the kingdom of Judah; the kingdom of Israel; and (or) the city-states, dominions and kingdoms of the Gentiles. And these exhortations were not simply “religious” but they were also “constitutional” in nature.³ Indeed, the unique role of the prophet was that of “constitutional interpretation,”⁴ that is to say, the interpretation of the *Torah* (i.e., “the domain of the keter torah”).⁵

When Amos preached, Uzziah was king of the southern kingdom of Judah, and Jeroboam was king of the northern kingdom of Israel.

An older contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah, Amos was active c. 760–755 BCE during the rule of kings Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah. He was from the southern Kingdom of Judah but preached in the northern Kingdom of Israel. Amos wrote at a time of relative **peace and prosperity** but also of **neglect of God's laws**. He spoke against an increased disparity between the very wealthy and the very poor. His major themes of justice, God's omnipotence, and divine judgment became staples of prophecy. The Book of Amos is attributed to him....

The whole northern empire had enjoyed a long period of peace and security marked by a revival of artistic and commercial development. Social corruption and the oppression of the poor and helpless were prevalent. Others, carried away by the free association with heathen peoples which resulted from conquest or commercial contact, went so far as to fuse with the Lord's worship that of pagan deities....

³ Daniel J. Elazar, “Dealing with Fundamental Regime Change: The Biblical Paradigm of the Transition from Tribal Federation to Federal Monarchy Under David,” *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* (Elazar Papers Index) <https://www.jcpa.org/dje/index-apc.htm>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

The ancient exhortation towards justice is expressed by the voice of God in Amos' teachings. Amos is told by God that the Israelites are going to face divine intervention as **oppression** was running rampant in Israel. God expressed this oppression by saying that the Israelites were practicing religiosity without righteousness. By **oppressing the poor and failing to practice justice** the Israelites were behaving unrighteously; **justice** was to be enacted as a core of God's message in Amos' prophetic teachings.⁶

Thus, the Book of Amos teaches that the northern Kingdom of Israel ultimately fell into the Assyrian captivity because, even though it had attained peace, security, and prosperity, that kingdom, in general, had also become *morally degenerate*.⁷

The Prophet Hosea had written that “[f]or I desired *mercy*, and not sacrifice; and the *knowledge of God* more than burnt offerings. But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.”⁸ Similarly, the Prophet Amos echoed the same sentiments, stating that *religious rituals* were not adequate substitutes for the actual *justice* and *holiness*, to wit:

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

⁶ “Amos,” Wikipedia (online encyclopedia): [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amos_\(prophet\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amos_(prophet))

⁷ In Book II of *The City of God*, Augustine of Hippo described the decline and fall of the Roman empire as stemming from a similar deterioration of morals and virtue. Towards the end of Book II, Augustine argues “that the Christian religion is health-giving” and provides “an exhortation to the Romans to renounce paganism.”

Source: *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950, pp. 40-73).

⁸ Hosea 6:6-7.

But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.⁹

Already, as early as the 8th century BC, the Prophet Amos had preached that social justice was far more important than orthodox religious practice—a theme that Christ himself repeatedly reiterated in the Gospels (see, e.g., Luke 10: 25-37).

“Amaziah the priest of Bethel” and “Jeroboam king of Israel” did not like Amos’ prophetic message, and they admonished him to stop prophesying in Israel and (or) return to his homeland and prophesy there in the kingdom of Judah.¹⁰

But Amos responded by stating that he himself had never been a professional prophet, or a soothsayer, but that he was by trade an humble, rustic farmer living on the countryside; but that God himself had sent him to the northern kingdom of Israel to prophesy.

Like the Prophet Hosea, who was his contemporary, the Prophet Amos had a message of dire warning: Israel’s prosperity had caused it to drift away from its close relationship and obedience to God— i.e., spiritual apostasy and moral degeneracy—and that, as a consequence, the northern kingdom of Israel would go into captivity.¹¹

The Prophet Amos also prophesied that God would scatter the Israelites amongst the nations, but that he would eventually regather the true and faithful Israelites under a restored “tabernacle of David.”¹² Notably, the “true and faithful

⁹ Amos 5:21-27.

¹⁰ Amos 7:10-13.

¹¹ Unlike Hosea, Amos does not specifically name the Assyrians or the Assyrian captivity.

¹² Amos 9:11.

Israelites” would include not simply persons of Hebrew genealogical lineage, but also “all the heathen, which are called by my name”¹³ (i.e., multinational, multicultural “the Church of the Gentiles”).¹⁴

This “scattering” and subsequent “regathering” of the Israelites from among the nations, and before a “tabernacle of David,” are, according to standard Reformed theology, prophetic references to the Christian Church, and to its head, Christ Jesus.¹⁵

¹³ Amos 9: 12.

¹⁴ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 654 (“... this was done by Christ in the Church of the Gentiles...”); and p. 696 (“This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace.”)

¹⁵ See, e.g., St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950) p. 634; and *Calvin’s Commentaries on the Bible* (Amos, Chapter 9:11).

Chapter One

“God’s divine Providence over the Gentile Nations”

The divine Providence of God, and its universal nature, is readily manifest in the Book of Amos. This prophecy reminded the children of Israel that God’s redemption had been readily available to the Gentiles,¹⁶ as well as to the Israelites, to wit:

Are ye not as children of the *Ethiopians* unto me, O children of Israel?
Saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?
And the *Philistines* from Caphtor, and the *Syrians* from Kir?¹⁷

Here Amos introduces us to the theological idea that God loves the Gentiles as much as he loves his firstborn son, Israel.¹⁸

Indeed, perhaps beginning with the Prophet Amos, the LORD God explicitly informs the Israelites that, even though they had a special Mosaic covenant, they are really no better than the Gentiles, whom God had previously redeemed and shown mercy. On this very point, the Reformed theologian John Calvin writes:

The Prophet shows here to the Israelites that their dignity would be no defense to them, as they expected. We have indeed seen in many places how foolish was the boasting of that people. Though they were more bound to God than other nations, they yet heedlessly boasted that they were a holy nation, as if indeed they had something of their own, but as Paul says, they were nothing. God had conferred on them singular benefits; but they were adorned with the plumes of another. **Foolish then and absurd was their glorying, when they thought themselves to be of more worth in the sight of God than other nations....**

The Prophet’s language is the same as though he had said, “Look whence the Lord has brought you out; for ye were as a dead carcass,

¹⁶ See, e.g., St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 654 (“... this was done by Christ in the Church of the Gentiles...”); and p. 696 (“This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace.”)

¹⁷ Amos 9: 7.

¹⁸ But throughout Hebrew theology, we are repeatedly informed that the “firstborn” is not necessarily he who ultimately receives the “blessing” – i.e., Essau and Jacob; Reuben and Judah; and Manasseh and Ephraim. In each case, the younger siblings Jacob, Judah, and Ephraim received the “blessing.”

and of no account: for the Egyptians treated your fathers as the vilest slaves: God brought you thence; then you have no nobility or excellency of your own, but the beginning of your dignity has proceeded from the gratuitous kindness of God. Yet ye think now that ye excel others, because ye have been redeemed: **God has also redeemed the Philistines**, when they were the servants of the Cappadocians; and besides, **he redeemed the Syrians** when they were servants to other nations.”¹⁹

Indeed, several Gentile (or non-Hebrew nations) —despite the fact that they were not under the Law of Moses and had none of its ceremonial laws and practices— are described in the Book of Amos as being within God’s divine Providence.

As such, several Gentile nations were also condemned, along with the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, in the Book of Amos for violating God’s general and universal moral laws (i.e., general equity).²⁰

Hence, with the Book of Amos we begin to see an emerging perception of the Hebrew faith that conceptualizes the God of Israel as being, as the Apostle Paul states in his Epistle to the Romans,

¹⁹ *Calvin’s Commentaries on the Bible* (Amos, Chapter 9:7).

²⁰ See, e.g., **WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH (1646) 19.4**, to wit:

To them also, as a body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging any other now, further than the **general equity** thereof may require.

See, e.g., **2ND LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH 19.4**, to wit:

To them also he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any now by virtue of that institution; their **general equity** only being of moral use.

See, also, the American Declaration of Independence, to wit:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the **Laws of Nature** and of **Nature’s God** entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that **all men are created equal**, that **they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights**, that among these are **Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness**.—....

And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of **divine Providence**, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

For there is no respect of persons with God....²¹

Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also....²²

The Book of Amos, which records events more than seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, lays the foundation for a more refined Hebrew or Jewish theology that was universal and cosmopolitan, and which later evolved into the Christian faith; that is, a reformed Israel that embraces faithful believers from every nation upon earth.²³

The Early Christian Church certainly analyzed the Jewish faith in light of universal themes set forth in the Old Testament, such as the Book of Amos. These Old Testament themes reinforced the idea of the equality among the Gentiles and the Hebrews and that both were under God's divine government as **divine Providence**.²⁴

Thus, referencing a divine Power which we may rightly call "divine Providence," the Prophet Amos condemned the following Gentile nations for violating various general equitable, moral, and natural law:

²¹ Romans 2:11.

²² Romans 3:29.

²³ See, e.g., St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 696 ("This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace.")

²⁴ See, e.g., "The Bible Says," <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-1/amos-13-5/>, stating:

In this case, God Himself is making the judgement. Although **God delegated authority to human governments to execute justice** (Romans 13:4), He is still the **ultimate judge**.

See, also, St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 158 ("God can never be believed to have left the kingdoms of men, their dominations and servitudes, outside of the laws of His providence.")

See, also, the American Declaration of Independence, to wit:

And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of **divine Providence**, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

See, also, *Calvin's Commentaries on the Bible* (Amos, Chapter 1).

Gentile Nation	Divine Providence in the Book of Amos
Damascus (Syria)	“transgressions of Damascus” ²⁵
Gaza	“transgressions of Gaza” ²⁶
Ashkelon	“transgressions of Ashkelon” ²⁷

²⁵ Amos 1:3. See, also, “The Bible Says,” <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-1/amos-13-5/>

“The city named *Damascus* was the capital of the nation of Aram during the 10th through 8th centuries BC. It is still the capital of modern Syria today....

As a result of God breaking *the gate bar of Damascus*, *the people of Aram would go exiled to Kir*. Not only would the kingdom of Aram fall, and its rulers have their authority crushed, its people would be conquered and taken into exile by its conquerors. The city named *Kir* was the place where the Arameans originally lived ([Amos 9:7](#)), although its precise location is unknown. Amos’s prophecy concerning Damascus was probably fulfilled in 732 BC when the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III captured the city, weakening it for the rest of the Old Testament period ([2 Kgs. 16:9](#)).”

²⁶ Amos 1:6. See, also, “The Bible Says,” <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-1/amos-13-5/>

Amos’s next prophetic indictment fell on Philistia. The prophet initially used *Gaza* as a synonym for the city-states of Philistia, probably because *Gaza* was one of the most prominent Philistine cities at that time. But other Philistine cities such as Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron would also be judged by God (v. 8)....

God’s judgment on the Philistines would result in complete destruction. God stated that even *the remnant of the Philistines would perish*. There would be no more Philistine land or culture. This prophecy was partially fulfilled during the time of the Assyrian Empire—Gaza fell to Assyria in 734 BC; *Ashdod*, in 711 BC; *Ashkelon* and *Ekron*, in 701 BC. But the prophecy was completely fulfilled later during the Maccabean period (168–134 BC). It surely came to pass because the *Lord GOD* had said so.

In spite of the Philistines becoming extinct, the Roman Emperor Hadrian named the land of Israel “Philistia” or “Palestine” to reflect his extreme dislike of the Jews. It is believed he chose the name because of the longstanding struggle between Israel and the Philistines, as a means of conveying a name most odious to the Jews.

²⁷ Amos 1:8. See, also, “The Bible Says,” <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-1/amos-13-5/>

The place called *Ashdod* was a city located midway between Joppa and *Gaza*, about three miles from the coast. It is identified with modern Tel Ashdod, 15 km north of *Ashkelon* and approximately 4 km inland from the Mediterranean Sea. The city called *Ashkelon* was a large seaport located on the Mediterranean coast 20 km north of Gaza and 50 km south of Tel Aviv ([Judges 1:18](#)). Finally, *Ekron* was the most northerly of the major cities of Philistia. During Israel’s conquest of the Promised Land, *Ekron* was not taken by Joshua ([Jos 13:3](#)). When the land was divided among the 12 tribes, *Ekron* was given first to Judah and then to Dan ([Jos 15:11, 45, 46; 19:43](#)). It was eventually taken by Judah ([Jgs 1:18](#)), but subsequently fell back to the Philistines.

Tyrus	“transgressions of Tyrus” ²⁸
Edom	“transgressions of Edom” ²⁹
Ammon	“transgressions of Ammon” ³⁰

²⁸ Amos 1:9. See, also, “The Bible Says,” <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-1/amos-13-5/>

The third city that would suffer the wrath of the LORD was *Tyre*, a city located on the Mediterranean coast north of Israel (modern-day Lebanon). Like Damascus and Gaza, *Tyre* is used to represent the entire nation of Phoenicia. The prophet probably chose *Tyre* because it was a wealthy city in the early eighth century, allowing the Phoenicians to control most of the commercial activity in the Mediterranean.

²⁹ Amos 1:11. See, also, “The Bible Says,” <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-1/amos-111-12/>

Next on the list of God’s indictments was *Edom*, a country located on the eastside of the Jordan River....Despite their family ties, the Edomites and the Israelites barely displayed brotherly love for one another. In fact, these two people groups were continually fighting against each other throughout most of their history. When the Israelites were at Kadesh, a town on the edge of Edom’s territory, they asked the Edomite king for permission to pass through his land. However, the Edomites “came out” against Israel “with a heavy force and a strong hand” (Numbers 20:20). They denied passage through their territory, causing the Israelites to turn away from them (Numbers 20:17–21). This incident set the stage for a hostile attitude which continued throughout the generations to the time of Amos (see for example, 2 Samuel 8:11–13; 2 Kgs. 8:20–22; 2 Kgs. 14:7).

In the book of Amos, God said He would judge Edom *because he pursued his brother with the sword, while he stifled his compassion*. This means that the Edomites attacked the Israelites on numerous occasions, and many wars were fought as a result. Amos made it clear when he said that Edom’s *anger tore continually, and he maintained his fury forever*. Rather than living in peace and helping their Israelite brothers, the Edomites *pursued them with the sword*, showing no compassion, only anger and hostility.... While we do not have the precise details of when and how Amos’s prophecy concerning Edom was fulfilled, we do know that Edom suffered from several attacks throughout its history. During the reign of King Amaziah of Judah, the Judean army entered into battle with Edom in the valley of Salt, between Beersheba and Arad. With savage brutality, Amaziah “killed of Edom 10,000 and took Sela by war and named it Joktheel” (2 Kgs. 14:7). The land of Edom was made a desolation by the time of Malachi, in the fifth century BC (Malachi 1:3), and was overtaken by the Nabateans, an Arabian tribe, a century later. The Nabateans built the famous tourist destination city of Petra. Today the ancient country of Edom is a part of modern Jordan.

³⁰ Amos 1:13. See, also, “The Bible Says,” <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-1/amos-113-15/>

In this section, God’s indictment fell on Ammon, a fertile area northeast of Moab, east of the Jordan River, between the Arnon and Jabbok rivers and extending eastward to the Syrian desert. This territory is located in the modern country of Jordan, whose capital Aman bears the memory of its heritage as being part of Ammon. The LORD said, *For three transgressions of the sons of Ammon and for four I will not revoke its punishment*.

The *sons of Ammon* were kinsmen to the Israelites because they traced their ancestry to the younger daughter of Lot (Genesis 19:38). Despite their familial ties with Israel, the Ammonites treated Israel brutally. Here, their grievous sin is that the Ammonites *ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead* (the Israelite land located east of the Jordan River, just north of Ammon).

Moab	“transgressions of Moab” ³¹

The Reformed theologian John Calvin noted that the Prophet Amos had clearly demonstrated that “God is the judge of all nations,” stating:

He shows briefly, in the last verse, that ruin was nigh the Israelites; for God, who had hitherto spared them, was now resolved to ascend his tribunal. But now, that he might better prepare the Israelites, **he shows that God, as a judge, would call all the neighboring nations to an account.** For had the Prophet threatened the Israelites only, they might have thought that what they suffered was by chance, when they saw the like things happening to their neighbors: ‘How is it credible that these evils and calamities have flowed from God’s vengeance, since the Idumeans, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Syrians, and the Sidonians, are implicated in these evils in common with ourselves? **For if God’s hand pursues us, it is the same with them: and if it is fate, that with blind force exercises its rule over the Moabites, the Idumeans, and the Syrians, the same thing, doubtless, is to be thought of our case.**’ Thus all the authority of the Prophet must have lost its power, except the Israelites were made to know that **God is the judge of all nations.**³²

The Prophet Amos prophesies that, just as God would execute punishment upon the surrounding Gentile nations for violating His divine laws, He would also execute a similar divine punishment upon the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

³¹ Amos 2:1. See, also, “The Bible Says,” <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-2/>

The Moabites would be judged by God for their *transgressions*, one of which was the burning of *the bones of the king of Edom to lime*. In the ancient world it was very important for a man’s dead body to receive proper burial. That is why tombs often had curses inscribed on them to protect them from being desecrated or treated with indignity (disrespect).

The actions of the Moabites show that they had no respect for human dignity of the Edomites. They humiliated Edom by disrespecting their dead. They not only defiled the graves of the king of Edom but also burned it to lime (or powder), rather than leaving the bones to have a proper burial. The LORD would not fail to punish those who disrespect a dead person’s body—whether a king or an ordinary person. Consequently, the LORD would *send fire upon Moab*, which would *consume the citadels of Kerioth*.

³² Calvin’s *Commentaries on the Bible* (Amos, Chapter 1).

Here, the Prophet Amos enunciated the fundamental Christian theological concept that the Apostle Paul would argue some seven hundred years later; namely, that “there is no respect of persons with God.”³³

Hence, in the Book of Amos, there is no meaningful difference between “Jew and Gentile,” and this *obscurity* between these two broad groups is more fully developed, and expounded, by the Early Church, which placed both “Jew and Gentile” under the singular headship of Christ.³⁴

For it was not until after the birth, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ did the Jews and the Early Church begin to reevaluate what the Prophet Amos was saying about the restored Israel that would emerge after captivity and having been scattered amongst the nations.³⁵

³³ Romans 2:11.

³⁴ See, e.g., Romans 2: 28-29 (“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”)

³⁵ See, e.g., St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950) p. 634.

Chapter Two

“Prophecy Against Judah”

The Book of Amos next proclaims destruction to the southern Kingdom of Judah and the northern Kingdom of Israel—but the vast majority of this book focusses on the Kingdom of Israel.

Judah has sinned because it “despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err.”³⁶ These were the “transgressions of Judah.”³⁷

Notably, the Prophet Isaiah, who was also the contemporary of Amos, and who prophesied against the kingdom of Judah, rendered the same judgment about the fruitlessness of “orthodox religion,” without social justice, stating:

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

³⁶ Amos 2:4.

³⁷ Amos 2:4. See, also, “The Bible Says,” <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-2/>

God’s pronouncement of judgment now reached His own people, the southern kingdom of Judah. The LORD said, *For three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke its punishment.* Like the surrounding pagan nations, Judah had committed offenses that deserved *punishment* . . . Yet *they rejected the law of the LORD and had not kept His statutes*, although the consequences for breaking God’s covenant were spelled out plainly. The *law of the LORD* refers to the teaching or covenant stipulations by which the Judeans (and the Israelites) were supposed to live to please their covenant partner, Yahweh. The word *statutes* is here used synonymously with the word *law*. Such stipulations are recorded in the Pentateuch, that is, the first five books of Moses (especially, from Exodus to Deuteronomy). God gave His laws to His chosen people so that they might learn to fear Him and obey His commandments (Deuteronomy 4:10; 5:29; 6:2). The people had agreed to abide by God’s covenant, which followed the pattern of the ancient suzerain vassal treaties. In these treaties, the suzerain, or superior ruler, promised blessings for loyalty and obedience, and cursings for rebellion. The people had agreed to enter into this covenant with God, and abide by its provisions.

Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.³⁸

I note here that the Prophet Amos is writing during the 8th century BC, and that the southern Kingdom of Judah did not go into captivity until the 6th century BC (March 16, 597 BC), and so we may conclude that Amos is prophesying events that would take place two centuries into the future.³⁹

Reformed theologian John Calvin's (1509 – 1564) *Commentaries on the Bible* discusses Amos 2:4-5, but makes no observations regarding when Amos's prophecies on the Judah's punishment was fulfilled.

A modern bible commentary, "The Bible Says," however, suggests that Amos's prophecy was a prediction about the destruction of Jerusalem included the entire history of the future Babylonian captivity in 597 BC up to the time of the Roman's destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD.⁴⁰

³⁸ Isaiah 1:11-17. See, also, Genesis 18:18-19 and Luke 10: 25-37.

³⁹ The 8th-century Prophet Isaiah, who lived in the southern Kingdom of Judah around the same time period that Amos lived, also prophesied against the kingdom of Judah and foretold of the same Babylonian captivity that occurred more than a century later.

⁴⁰ "The Bible Says," <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-2/>, stating:

Throughout history, *Jerusalem* and *Judah* suffered from many attacks. In 586 BC, the Babylonians destroyed the temple along with the city and its walls and deported the Jews to Babylon (2 Kings 24–25). When Cyrus the Great allowed the people of God to return to Jerusalem, the people began rebuilding the temple, a project that was completed in 516 BC under Zerubbabel (Ezra 6). Under Nehemiah's leadership the people were able to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in 444 BC (Nehemiah 6).

Chapter Three

“Prophecy Against Israel-- Violence, Injustice, and Exploitation of the Poor”

The Book of Amos finally focusses on the “transgressions of Israel.”⁴¹

Significantly, most of these transgressions relate to general equitable, moral, and natural laws—and not simply violations of ceremonial, ecclesiastical, or religious laws pertaining to the ancient Hebrew religion.

The Prophet Amos makes clear that entire nation state of the northern Kingdom of Israel, although material prosperous, has grown wretched and wicked, and has systematically exploited the poor and the oppressed, to wit:

- “[T]hey have sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes”;⁴²
- They “pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor”;⁴³

During the roughly 400 year intertestamental period, between the writing of the last book of the Old Testament and the advent of Jesus, the Seleucid king Antiochus IV (175–163 BC) destroyed the temple and executed many Jews. A few years later Judas the Maccabee—the leader of the Maccabean revolt (167–134 BC) against the Seleucid empire—liberated Jerusalem, and the Jews were able to restore the temple. In 63 BC, the Romans besieged and took the city, making Judah part of the Roman empire. In 40 BC, Caesar Augustus made Herod the Great king over Judah. In 20 BC, Herod began renovating the Jewish temple that had been built in the sixth century. That renovation project was completed in AD 66. The Romans subsequently destroyed the temple in AD 70, as a part of their crushing of Jewish zealots during the Jewish Wars (67-73 AD). This persecution resulted in a massive dispersion of the Jews throughout the world.

Nevertheless, the Bible predicts that one day the Jews will return to their homeland. The Jerusalem temple, which was destroyed by the Romans, will be rebuilt. In those days and at that time, the LORD “will restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem” (Joel 3:1).

⁴¹ Amos 2:6. See, also, “The Bible Says,” <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/amos/amos-2/amos-26-16/>

Under the reign of Hoshea, Israel fell to Assyria in 722 BC. The Assyrian king Shalmaneser V “captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes” (2 Kgs. 17:6). Alternatively, foreign groups were resettled in Samaria, “from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim” (2 Kgs. 17:24). The resulting peoples became the Samaritans. During New Testament times the Jews (from Judea) would not interact with Samaritans because they were mixed ethnicity, only being partially Jewish, and their religious practice clashed with that of the Jews.

⁴² Amos 2:6.

⁴³ Amos 2:7.

- They “turn aside the way of the meek”;⁴⁴
- They “store up violence and robbery in their palaces”;⁴⁵
- They “oppress the poor... crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.”⁴⁶
- They “turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth.”;⁴⁷
- “They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly”;⁴⁸
- “[T]hey afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right”;⁴⁹
- “[Y]our treading is upon the poor and ye take from him burdens of wheat”;⁵⁰
- “[Y]e have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock”;⁵¹

Given this terrible state of circumstances, orthodox religious practices, the religious ceremonial laws, and the sacrifices and burnt offerings will not expiate Israel’s vast crimes.

Only an internal circumcision of the heart and the actual practice of social justice will release Israel from the consequences of its crimes and national sins. The Prophet Amos proclaimed:

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings,

⁴⁴ Amos 2:7.

⁴⁵ Amos 3: 10.

⁴⁶ Amos 4:1.

⁴⁷ Amos 5:7.

⁴⁸ Amos 5:10.

⁴⁹ Amos 5:12.

⁵⁰ Amos 5:11.

⁵¹ Amos 6:12.

I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

Take thug away from me the noise of thy songs: for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.⁵²

The Prophet Hosea, who was Amos' contemporary, rendered the same judgment. Hosea had prophesied: "For I desired *mercy*, and not sacrifice; and the *knowledge of God* more than burnt offerings. But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me."⁵³ And, finally, the Prophet Isaiah rendered the same judgment against "orthodox religious practices" that are not accompanied by substantial social justice.⁵⁴

⁵² Amos 5:12-24.

⁵³ Hosea 6:6-7.

⁵⁴ Isaiah 1:11-17 ("To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? ... Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.") See, also, Luke 10: 25-37.

Chapter Four

“God’s Judgment Against the Northern Kingdom of Israel”

The Prophet Amos makes it clear that the northern Kingdom of Israel is even more guilty than the Gentiles, because the Israelites had a special covenant with God and the Law of Moses to lead and guide them, whereas the Gentiles did not.⁵⁵

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth,” writes Amos, “therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”⁵⁶

“[B]ehold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you....”⁵⁷

“Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.”⁵⁸

Amos the Prophet died, circa, in 745 BC.⁵⁹

The northern Kingdom of Israel fell into the Assyrian captivity in 722 BC. At that time, Hoshea was the king of the northern Kingdom of Israel.

The Assyrian captivity (or the Assyrian exile) is the period in the history of ancient Israel and Judah during which several thousand Israelites from the Kingdom of Israel were forcibly relocated by the Neo-Assyrian Empire. This is one of the many instances of the resettlement policy of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. The Kingdom of

⁵⁵ Romans 3:1-31 (“What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? ... Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.”) And see Romans 2:14-16.

⁵⁶ Amos 3:3.

⁵⁷ Amos 6:14.

⁵⁸ Amos 5:27.

⁵⁹ “Amos,” Wikipedia (online encyclopedia): [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amos_\(prophet\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amos_(prophet))

Israel was conquered by the Neo-Assyrian monarchs Tiglath-Pileser III and Shalmaneser V. The later Assyrian rulers Sargon II and his son and successor, Sennacherib, were responsible for finishing the twenty-year demise of Israel's northern ten-tribe kingdom, although they did not overtake the Kingdom of Judah. Jerusalem was besieged, but not taken. **The tribes forcibly resettled by Assyria later became known as the Ten Lost Tribes.**⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Source: "The Assyrian Captivity," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_captivity.

Chapter Five

“Prophecy on the Restored Kingdom of Israel”

Despite the Assyrian captivity in 722 BC, and the scattering of the Israelites among the nations, the Book of Amos states that God would not “utterly destroy the house of Jacob.”⁶¹

Amos goes on to describe a divine separation of the faithful Israelites from the unfaithful Israelites, stating, “the sinners of my people shall die by the sword...”⁶² But, at the same time, “[f]or, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations... yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.”⁶³ And God shall “raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen... as in the days of old...”⁶⁴

In *The City of God*, Augustine of Hippo interpreted this Scripture’s (Amos 9:11) reference to the “tabernacle of David” to be a prophecy of Christ.⁶⁵

Similarly, the Reformed theologian John Calvin reached the same conclusion as Augustine’s, stating:

Hence the Prophet now applies comfort by saying, that God would punish the sins of the people of Israel in such a way as to remember still his own promise. We know, that whenever the Prophets designed to give some hope to a distressed people, they set forth the Messiah, for in him all the promises of God, as Paul says, are Yea and Amen, (2 Corinthians 1:20) and there was no other remedy for the dispersion than for God to gather all the scattered members under one head. Hence, when the head is taken away, the Church has no head; especially when it is scattered and torn, as was the case after the time

⁶¹ Amos 9:8.

⁶² Amos 9:10.

⁶³ Amos 9: 9.

⁶⁴ Amos 9:11.

⁶⁵ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 634.

of Amos. It is no wonder then that the Prophets, after having prophesied of the destruction of the people, such as happened after the two kingdoms were abolished, should recall the minds of the faithful to **the Messiah**; for except God had gathered the Church under one head, there would have been no hope. This is, therefore, the order which Amos now observes.

In that day, he says, will I raise up **the tabernacle of David**: as though he had said, that the only hope would be, when the redeemers who had been promised would appear. This is the import of the whole. After having shown then that the people had no hope from themselves, for God had tried all means, but in vain and after having denounced their final ruin, he now subjoins, “**The Lord will yet have mercy on his people, for he will remember his covenant.**” How will this be? “The Redeemer shall come.” We now then understand the design of the Prophet and the meaning of the verse.⁶⁶

Hence, the Early Church believed that “**the house of Israel among all nations,**”⁶⁷ as depicted in the Book of Amos, was the “true Israelites”⁶⁸ who God would reunite under one head,⁶⁹ i.e., the Messiah or Christ.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Calvin’s *Commentaries on the Bible* (Amos, Chapter 9:11).

⁶⁷ Amos 9:9.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 658 (“... the **true Israelites**, the citizens of the country that is above.”)

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Hosea 1:11.

⁷⁰ See, e.g., St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 660 (“It was given as the chief and most necessary sign of His coming... that every one of them spoke in the tongues of all nations; thus signifying that the unity of the catholic Church would embrace all nations, and would in like manner speak in all tongues.”) and p. 696 (“This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace.”)

CONCLUSION

The Prophet Amos had preached that social justice was far more important than orthodox religious practice⁷¹— a theme that Christ himself repeatedly reiterated in the Gospels (see, e.g., Luke 10: 25-37).⁷²

The Book of Amos also describes a God who is no respecter of nations or persons, but who punishes and redeems all nations and peoples alike— both Hebrew and Gentile. Hence, the central theme in the Book of Amos prefigures the central themes of the Gospels and the Pauline letters to the New Testament Church, namely that the whole world (i.e., the predestinated elect from every nation) has been redeemed through Christ.

The Prophet Amos’ mission was to speak truth to the powerful within the ancient kingdom of Israel. His message was that God’s divine judgment would soon be executed against several Gentile nations, as well as the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

The Prophet Amos also prophesied that, because of the kingdom of Israel’s unpardonable sins, God would scatter the Israelites amongst the nations; but, also, that God would eventually regather the true and faithful Israelites under a restored “tabernacle of David.”⁷³

This “scattering” and subsequent “regathering” of the Israelites from among the nations and before a restored “tabernacle of David” are, according to standard Reformed theology, prophetic references to the Christian Church and its head, the Messiah, the Christ, Jesus of Nazereth.⁷⁴

⁷¹ See Amos 5:12-24; in the Prophet Amos we see an exemplification of the “Office of the Prophet” as interpreter of divine Providence, which naturally includes the law of general equity, constitutional law, political science, and public policy. And as this prophetic office was to the Prophet Amos, so must it also be to the Christian Church— to forewarn and admonish whole nations and peoples; to speak divine truth to religious, civil, and secular powers; and to advocate for the alleviation of oppression of the weak, the poor, and the marginalized. He was joined in this judgment by his brother prophets **Hosea** (Hosea 6:6-7) and **Isaiah** (Isaiah 1:11-17).

⁷² See, e.g., Robert F. Cochran and Zachary R. Calo, *Agape, Justice and Law: How might Christian Love Shape Law?* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁷³ Amos 9:11.

⁷⁴ See, e.g., St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950) p. 634; and *Calvin’s Commentaries on the Bible* (Amos, Chapter 9:11).

THE END

