

Let Justice Roll (1): The Lord Roars From Zion

(Amos 1-2)

I. Introduction

- A. These are true stories; the names are changed... because I can't remember them
 - 1. Joe was convinced that baptism must be by immersion, not sprinkling
 - a. He got into several heated arguments with co-workers over baptism
 - 1) The word "baptism" means immerse; baptism is a death and burial
 - 2) I knew this from Joe's brother; Joe himself didn't come to church
 - b. He knew what the Bible said, it just didn't change his life that much
 - 2. Jack was a fairly prominent preacher whose life totally went off the rails
 - a. He drank heavily, did drugs, left his wife—turned his back former life
 - b. Another preacher flew from another city to plead with him to repent
 - 1) Jack's response was, "Your position on Holy Spirit is false doctrine"
 - 2) Jack wasn't living by the Spirit, but knew false doctrine when saw it
- B. Paul tells of those "*having a form of godliness but denying its power*" (**2 Tim 3:5**)
 - 1. Paul is talking about false teachers who would cause problems for church
 - a. They weren't false teachers because they got mixed up on their doctrine
 - b. No, false teachers would lead to lives were false before God (**2 Tim 3:2-4**)
 - 2. It's easy to see spirituality as outward acts of religion, doctrine and worship
 - a. We can believe the right things and not have it really impact our lives
 - b. We can focus on religion and while all the while missing God!
- C. That will be repeated theme in Amos as we look at his book for next 4 weeks.
 - 1. Amos preached during the reign of Jeroboam II, a time of great prosperity.
 - a. Internal struggles in Assyria allowed Israel great political freedom.
 - 1) Freedom led to an increase in trade and wealth for rich aristocracy.
 - 2) This same prosperity brought a total disregard for poor & powerless.
 - b. This prosperity led Israel to see themselves as in the good grace of God.
 - 1) So there was an emphasis on the feasts and sacrifices of the OT.
 - 2) While they stressed religion, they lived pretty much as they pleased.
 - c. Amos was called as prophet to shake things up and call Israel back to God

2. Amos had several strikes against him as prophet (name- “burden bearer”)
 - a. **First**, Amos lacked the credentials of a proper prophet (**Amos 7:14**).
 - b. **Second**, he was an outsider (village in Judah preaching in Samaria).
 - c. **Third**, he preached a negative message during a time of optimism.
 - 1) All prophets had critical messages—never “*I’m OK, You’re OK.*”
 - 2) Things in Israel were going well; they didn’t want to hear negativity.
3. So what do we know of Amos of Tekoa, shepherd and caretaker of figs.
 - a. That pretty much covers it— a working stiff called to be a prophet.
 - b. From his book, we see a no-nonsense, straight-talking, in-your-face guy
4. Amos is going to deal with a people substituting religion for faithfulness.
 - a. People who focus on their prosperity and refused to see others. (**1-2**)
 - b. People who see blessings in being chosen without responsibility. (**3-4**)
 - c. People who focus on worship and ignore faithfulness to God. (**5-6**)
 - d. People who want only what is good rather than what is true. (**7-9**)
5. Amos’ book is prophetic and poetic, but his message is thoroughly modern

II. The Lord Roars from Zion: THEN

- A. Amos begins by getting our attention— “*the Lord roars from Zion*” (**Amos 1:2**)
 1. When times are good, people think that they have no need of God.
 - a. Following 9/11, there was a surge in church attendance, but it didn’t last.
 - b. Sometimes we see need for God, but during prosperity? Not so much.
 2. So God gets Israel’s attention here as lion roaring or a storm thundering
 - a. **Psalm 29** picture God as a storm coming inland from over water (**29:3-7**)
 - b. If you convince yourself that God is not watching, you can do as please
 - c. But Amos dispels that notion—God’s voice roars and the land withers!
 3. What follows is God’s voice; 8 times repeats, “*This is what the Lord says*”
- B. But the voice of the Lord begins its thundering in a most surprising way
 1. Amos condemns the neighbors of Northern Kingdom of Israel (**1:3-5**)
 - a. This formula (X, even X+1) is common Hebraic figure (**Prov 30:18-19**)
 - b. It’s a way to give emphasis, usually to larger number (*maidens, not eagles*)
 - c. In Amos 1-2, only the larger number is given— 1 sin for each nation

2. God is condemning the sins of Israel's neighbors—they can live with that
 - a. Pagan peoples are condemned for what we see as human rights violations
 - 1) Damascus (*Syria*) and Ammon are condemned for wartime atrocities
 - 2) Sin of Gaza (*Philistines*), Tyre (*Phoenicia*) & Edom is slave-trading
 - 3) Moab is condemned for desecrating the body of a captive king
 - 4) Judah, Israel's sister nation, has broken their covenant with God
 - b. How would Israel have responded to God's condemnation of neighbors?
 - 1) Their prosperity, covenant, worship meant they were God's chosen
 - 2) Of course, God was going to judge their enemies... and bless them
 - c. Amos is speaking to Israel; he's drawing a target closer-n-closer to them
 - d. Amos speaks to these other sins only to drop the hammer on Israel
- C. Israel could see the sin of other nations but was blind to her own ([Amos 2:6-7](#))
1. Runaway prosperity made Israel forget who they were... and who God was
 - a. The sin isn't their prosperity but that prosperity led them to forget poor
 - 1) They, "Sell the righteous for silver, and needy for a pair of sandals"
 - 2) In their focus on material things, they "*trample the heads of poor*"
 - b. Easy prosperity led God's people to forget and to even abuse the poor
 2. But isn't Amos really condemning the **idolatry** of Israel? ([Amos 2:8](#))
 - a. OK, "*drinking wine in the house of their god*" does seem like idolatry
 - 1) RSV/ESV- "*in the house of their God.*" NET- "*temple of their God*"
 - 2) Hebrew can be either Big-G or little-G and the translations are mixed
 - b. **Point:** They were abusing the poor at the same time they were religious
 - 1) Wine they drank in temple came from fining or taxing the poor!
 - 2) They were laying on garments they had taken as pledge ([Exo 22:26](#))
 - 3) But they laid on those garment BY ALTARS—under God's nose!
 3. Root of their lethargy—they forgot about God's blessings. ([Amos 2:9-11](#))
 - a. God here reminds Israel that it was He who gave them their prosperity
 - 1) **Physical Blessings:** Freed from Egypt and given land of Amorites
 - 2) **Spiritual Blessings:** God had given them the prophets and Nazarites
 - b. But they only saw the stuff, and they forgot about the God who gave it

III. The Lord Roars from Zion: Today

- A. Remember what Moses warned before Israel entered Canaan (**Deut 8:11-14**)
 - 1. Moses was concerned as soon as Israel settled in, they would need God
 - 2. And isn't that precisely what Amos accuses Israel of doing here?
 - a. Once they had prosperity, power and position—they didn't need God.
 - b. Because they didn't see God, they couldn't see the poor and powerless.
- B. When the Bible speaks to the prosperous and powerful, we'd better listen!
 - 1. Prosperous? Isn't news dominated by words like **recession & downturn**?
 - a. We may joke about 401K's turning into 201K's, but its no joke!
 - b. People are really hurting—lost their jobs, savings, retirement & hope
 - 2. One of the words that you hear a lot these days is "*Market Correction.*"
 - a. Stocks were unnaturally high; it awhile for the market to correct itself
 - b. Maybe its good time for us to do same thing—correct how we see stuff
 - 1) Maybe like Israel, we have put to much value on our material stuff
 - 2) Maybe like Israel, we have overlooked the poor and the powerless
 - 3) Maybe like Israel, our focus on the material has left God out-of-focus
 - c. So maybe this time of "*Market Correct*" can serve to correct our hearts!
 - 3. Hard times should cause us to stop and consider what's really important?
 - a. Is it really important to drop \$4 at Starbucks? Or to eat out tonight?
 - b. Maybe we will find that some of the stuff we thought was important isn't
 - c. Maybe we find what's really important is obeying God & helping others.
 - 1) Isn't that what Jesus calls the two great commands? (**Matt 22:37-40**)
 - 2) When the good times are rolling, it's hard to see past your stuff
 - d. If hard times help us see what's really important, let the hard times roll!
- C. Amos is the voice of the Lord that thunders to get his people attention
 - 1. He is trying to get our attention focused on what it is that's really important
 - a. Money and things may come and go, but they can't bring true meaning
 - b. One way God truly blesses us in money is in helping others (**Eph 4:28**)
 - c. If we focus only on our things, we totally loose our focus on God
 - 2. The voice of the Lord roars this morning—does he have your attention?