

# God is the Judge of all the Earth

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Date: 19 April 2015

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, let's turn now to our reading, which is the prophet Amos, and you'll find him on page 764 of our church Bibles, if you have the big church Bible.

The prophet Amos, I'm going to read chapter 1, verse 1, to chapter 2, verse 3, tonight. Chapter 1, verse 1, to chapter 2, verse 3, and you'll see that after the opening two verses, this passage falls into six sections, more or less of equal length, where the Lord God, through the prophet Amos, addresses various Gentile nations who are living very close to the land of Israel and Judah. The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds 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 revoke the punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron.

[ 1 : 27 ] So I will send a fire upon the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the strongholds of Ben-Hadad. I will break the gate bar of Damascus and cut off the inhabitants from the valley of Avin, and him who holds the scepter from Beth-Eden, and the people of Syria shall go into exile to Keir, says the Lord.

Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they carried into exile a whole people to deliver them up to Edom.

So I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, and it shall devour her strongholds. I will cut off the inhabitants from Ashdod, and him who holds the scepter from Ashkelon.

I will turn my hand against Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, says the Lord.

Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they delivered up a whole people to Edom, and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.

So I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre, and it shall devour her strongholds. Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity, and his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever.

[ 2 : 55 ] So I will send a fire upon Timan, and it shall devour the strongholds of Bozrah. Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of the Ammonites, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead, that they might enlarge their border.

So I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour her strongholds, with shouting on the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind. And their king shall go into exile, he and his princes together, says the Lord.

Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because he burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom.

So I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the strongholds of Kerioth, and Moab shall die amid uproar, amid shouting and the sound of the trumpet.

I will cut off the ruler from its midst, and will kill all its princes with him, says the Lord. Amen. The word of the Lord.

[ 4 : 04 ] Amen. Amen. But let's turn again to the book of Amos, chapter 1, page 764 in our church Bibles.

And my title for this evening is God is the Judge of all the earth. I'm giving a title to the whole series of sermons, which I'm calling The Roaring of the Lion.

For reasons which we shall soon see. So the judgment of all the earth tonight. Now this man Amos, and the book that bears his name, date from about 760 BC.

And therefore many people who read Amos today would want to write him off as ancient history, as dead as the woolly mammoth. But as soon as you actually begin to read the prophet Amos, you realize that he is dealing with subjects of perpetual interest and perpetual urgency.

In fact, in this very first chapter, he speaks of slavery. Well, that still goes on, doesn't it? He speaks of people trafficking, of the breaking of international treaties. He speaks of barbarous atrocities, such as the ripping open of pregnant women.

[ 5 : 27 ] It all sounds so contemporary. It's the way people behave today. In fact, this first chapter of Amos reads very much like a bulletin of the BBC's 6 o'clock news.

With this exception, that it records not only horrible human behavior, but also the fact that God is going to judge and punish the perpetrators of these things.

Now the book of Amos is a book about God's judgment of wicked human behavior. And I want to show how this is a deeply comforting and encouraging message for us, but at the same time, a message that will make us very thoughtful about the God who is to be feared as well as trusted.

Well, let me start off by a little bit of historical scene setting. Can you imagine a situation where you have two comparatively small nations, which are united, but united rather uncomfortably?

Can you think of that? We don't have to look very far afield, do we? I guess England and Scotland. Well, think of the history. We have known terrible times of bloodshed and warfare.

[ 6 : 39 ] It must have been deeply unsettling to have been alive in the days of Wallace and Bruce and Edward I. But there have been some pretty rough times since then, have there not?

Think of the 18th century, for example. Would the Jacobite uprisings succeed in reestablishing the Stuart kings? Or was the House of Hanover with its German kings, the Georges, going to become established?

More blood was shed. More bitterness was created. And yes, a union was formed between England and Scotland. But that union, as we know, is again under threat. And whether we voted yes or no in last year's referendum, I guess we all feel a bit uncomfortable about the longer-term future.

Now, I mention Scotland and England simply because they provide a parallel with what was going on in the Promised Land in Amos' day. The people of Israel, under Joshua's leadership, had crossed the River Jordan into the land of Canaan in about 1400 BC.

400 years later, in 1000 BC, David had come to the throne, and David was able to consolidate the whole kingdom into one political entity, all the way from Dan to Beersheba, as we might say in this country, all the way from John O'Groats to Land's End.

[ 7 : 59 ] It was one kingdom. It was centered upon its capital city, Jerusalem, the city of David, the city of God. David reigned for about 40 years, and he was succeeded by his son Solomon, who also reigned for about 40 years.

So there was 80 years of unity. Then Solomon died. He was succeeded by his unwise son, Rehoboam, and the kingdom quickly became divided into two kingdoms.

Let's have a look at the map on the screen, if we may, please. There we have it. Good. Now, you'll see there we have the two kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south.

Now, Jerusalem, just south of the border between the two countries, that continued to be the capital of Judah, and Samaria became the capital of Israel. And you'll see this very division.

Just keep it up there, Johnny, for a moment. You'll see this division reflected in the very first verse of the book of Amos. Have a look at verse one. Now, friends, even if history is not your pin-up subject, you do need to get this division of Israel and Judah firmly into the inside of your head.

[ 9 : 19 ] Otherwise, there will be large parts of Old Testament history that you will understand as well as my dog understands higher mathematics. Now, let's notice one or two other historical points.

Uzziah, king of Judah, reigned from 791 BC to 740 BC. And Jeroboam, the son of Joash, reigned in Israel from 791 to 753.

So the two kings died in 740 and 753. So Amos' work of preaching happened during the first half of that particular century, the 8th century BC.

But you'll see there's a precise note at the end of verse one, two years before the earthquake. Now, that must have been a memorable and dreadful earthquake because the prophet Zechariah mentions the same earthquake in his book some 250 years later.

It must have been a huge event, as memorable as the Black Death in Europe or the Irish potato famine, something big and destructive. And archaeologists record that this earthquake probably happened in about the year 760 BC.

[10:29] And that gives us a fairly precise date for the book of Amos. Thanks, Johnny. Well, so much for the bare bones of the historical setting. What about the man Amos himself?

Well, let's notice two things about him in particular. First, he was a farmer. Verse one tells us that he was from among the shepherds of Tekoa. And later in the book, in chapter 7, we learn that he was also a grower of sycamore fig trees.

So his regular work was food production, the production of figs and mutton and wool. But he says this in chapter 7. The Lord took me from following the flock.

And the Lord said to me, go, prophesy to my people Israel. So that means he hadn't been trained in the ways of the prophets. He hadn't been a ministry apprentice.

He hadn't been to the Corn Hill training course in Jerusalem. And that makes his call to be a prophet all the more impressive. There were schools of prophets in those days in Israel.

[11:31] But Amos clearly had not been part of that kind of setup. The Lord had extracted him from his farming and had sent him with a most challenging message to the people of Israel north of the border.

And we shall see as we study this book just how courageous he had to be so as to discharge his commission. So that's the first thing. He was a farmer. Secondly, he was one of the earliest cross-cultural missionaries.

Verse 1 here tells us that he was from Tekoa. And Tekoa was in the land of Judah, not far from Jerusalem. But he was sent by the Lord from Tekoa in Judah, northwards across the border into Israel.

And that was dangerous because of the hostile relationships between Israel and Judah. In fact, in chapter 7, there's a pompous man who appears, the priest of Bethel, a man called Amaziah.

And he says to Amos, run back to Judah, you seer, and prophesy there. Earn your bread there if you must. But shut your carbuncle of a mouth in Israel. He doesn't quite use exactly that language, but that's certainly what he means.

[12:35] Now, Amos' contemporary Jonah was also an international missionary. As you know, he was sent to Nineveh, much further away. But in sending Amos to Israel, the Lord helps us to see just how important Israel was to him.

Well, let's turn from the history of the man to what the man said. And this, of course, is the really important thing. Because the words of Amos are the words of God, God's own message.

The message of the book of Amos is God's message to the people of Israel in 760 BC. But it remains God's message to us today, to the people of the 21st century AD.

Because God is today exactly as he was in the days of Amos. He is unchanged. And Amos' words will tell us a lot about God. So let's notice verse 2.

Because verse 2 colors the whole book of Amos. It's rather like a heading for the whole prophecy. And if you can listen to verse 2 without trembling just a little bit, you have a thick skin.

[13:42] And he said, that's Amos. And Amos said, the Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem. Consequence? The pastures of the shepherds mourn and the top of Carmel withers.

Now if you look at a Bible atlas, you will see that the distance between Jerusalem and Mount Carmel is something like 60 miles. So what God has to say from his city, Jerusalem, is directed northwards, right up to Mount Carmel at the northern extreme of Israel.

And his voice, as well as being the roar of a lion, is a bit like a flamethrower here. The vegetation right across the land withers under the blast. Amos is saying that the Lord's message to Israel is one of imminent judgment, indeed destruction.

And you'll see that Amos likens the Lord God to a lion. And this lion is roaring. And the Hebrew language experts will tell us that the word used here for roaring means the pouncing roar that a lion makes just at the moment that it leaps upon its prey.

Now it's worth dwelling on this roaring of the lion for a moment. Lions, you won't find lions in Israel today, but lions were common throughout the Middle East in those days.

[14:57] In fact, there were lions in the land of Syria right up to about 1850 AD. In other words, less than 200 years ago. And if you were a shepherd like Amos, responsible for flocks of sheep,

you would have known only too well what a hungry lion can do to sheep.

Just look across the page to, or over the page to chapter 3, verse 12. Here's a shepherd speaking. 3.12, thus says the Lord, as the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued with the corner of a couch and part of a bed.

Now Amos is surely speaking from experience there, as he remembers the bitter pain of picking up the remains of a valuable sheep after a lion has been raiding.

Just a bit of bone and ear. And Amos must have heard lions roaring close to his farm almost every night. A lion's roar is a terrifying sound.

Apparently, if you're very close to it, the very ground under your feet trembles. Years ago, I was on a wilderness trekking expedition in South Africa, in game reserves there, for several nights.

[16:14] I was in a Bedford van with a few others, and we were sleeping out every night under the stars in sleeping bags. No tents. Just out under the stars. And one night, with nothing between me and the wilderness, but half an inch of sleeping bag, I heard lions roaring.

Now these lions were at least a mile away. But I literally, physically trembled in my sleeping bag as I heard this noise. Even at a mile's distance, it's a sound of unbelievable ferocity and menace.

And what Amos says here in chapter 1, verse 2, is addressed to people who, like him, had often heard the lions roaring. They knew that it was a terrifying sound.

And by prefacing his whole prophecy with this verse, Amos is warning his listeners that the message of his sermons is a message that the Lord is roaring like a lion.

His displeasure with Israel has reached a point of explosion. Judgment, therefore, is imminent. And let me offer you a crumb of comfort at this stage.

[17:18] The prophecies of judgment in the Bible, and this includes the prophecies of Jesus about judgment, they all proceed ultimately from God's mercy.

Now this is exactly what we see in the preaching of Jesus. Just think of that famous summary of his preaching which Mark gives us in his first chapter. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent, repent, therefore. The kingdom of God is at hand means that the judgment of God is pressing at the gates. The king is the judge. The king is here.

Jesus is the king and the judge. So repent while a moment of opportunity remains. Repent and believe the good news and be forgiven and saved. Now that's the message of Amos to Israel.

The lion is roaring. He's ready to destroy. Seek him and live, therefore. Don't persist in your hard-heartedness against him. Now over these coming weeks, as we work our way through this book, we'll be seeing a number of judgments threatened by the Lord in the book of Amos.

[18:21] And it is right that we should tremble before them. But let's never forget that behind the threatened judgment is the mercy of God. Now it's not difficult really to understand this.

Just think of the loving father or mother shouting at their child. Richard, if you strike that match near that can of petrol, I shall box your ears.

Now that's a threat of judgment, isn't it? But it proceeds from love. The loving parent threatens the judgment because he wants the child to avoid disaster. Behind the judgment is the mercy.

Now of course, God's words about judgment are no idle threat. If there's no response of repentance and trust, the judgment will fall. And in the case of this prophecy, it did fall some years later.

Well, let's turn now to the bulk of chapter 1 and the first little section of chapter 2. Look with me at the way the text is laid out here. Between chapter 1, verse 3, and chapter 2, verse 3, there are six paragraphs.

[19:30] And each begins, thus says the Lord. And each paragraph announces the Lord's judgment against one of the Gentile nations that bordered the lands of Israel and Judah.

So we start in chapter 1, verse 3, with Damascus, the capital of Syria. Next, in verse 6, Amos turns to Gaza, one of the principal cities of the Philistines.

Then in verse 9, we go to Tyre, which was a wealthy coastal city further north towards the Lebanon. Then in verse 11, we go to Edom, which lay to the south and east of the Dead Sea.

Then to the Ammonites in verse 13, who lived just to the east of the river Jordan. And then in chapter 2, verse 1, to Moab, which lay between the territories of Ammon and Edom.

So we'll look at these six judgments against the Gentiles. Each of them follows the same formula or pattern. So let's take verse 3 as an example. Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of

Damascus and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron.

[ 20 : 40 ] So in the first half of the verse, and this is true of each of these sections, the Lord says, for three transgressions of so-and-so and for four. Now that is simply a verbal device designed to attract the reader's attention and to make the point that there is multiple transgression in view.

It's not something small. It's something very serious and very wicked and cannot be overlooked.

And God says, I will not revoke the punishment. He's made up his mind.

Then in the second half of the verse, you'll see that the sin of the nation in question is described. So in verse 3, the Syrians in Damascus have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron.

Then the next section of the oracle, verses 4 and 5, describe what God is going to do to the people of Damascus as he judges them. And in each oracle, the words of judgment begin with the phrase, so I will send a fire upon, whichever is the principal city of that area.

And that phrase you'll see is repeated in verse 7, verse 10, verse 12, verse 14, chapter 2, verse 2, and chapter 2, verse 5.

[ 21 : 53 ] So it's a simple repeated pattern. In each case, the sin is described and then the judgment is declared. So let's look at the nature of these sins.

First of all, the Syrians of Damascus in verse 3. Johnny, could you press a button or two and just send the map up into our view again for a moment, please? Because you'll see that in verse 3, Amos says, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron.

Now, the area of Gilead is really that area, it's within Israel. In fact, it's a little bit further east, more or less east of the Sea of Galilee and running up towards Syria, up in the north-eastern part of the country.

And the Ammonites, we're going to see later, also attacked that part. It was a rather vulnerable part of Israel from the east. Thanks very much, Johnny. So they threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron.

Now, Amos could be referring there to a literal barbaric form of punishment in which a heavy threshing sledge with iron teeth was actually dragged across people who were lying on the ground.

[ 23 : 03 ] More likely, it's a metaphorical description of the cruel way that the Syrians were oppressing a people weaker than themselves, pillaging the countryside, exploiting them without mercy, and perhaps imposing unbearable rates of tax upon them.

Could that sort of behavior possibly be happening anywhere in the world today? Verse 6. The Philistines of Gaza. Gaza was then where it is still today.

The Gaza Strip. Now, what have they been doing? Well, verse 6. For three transgressions of Gaza and for four, I will not revoke the punishment because they carried into exile a whole people to deliver them up to Edom.

Slave trading. Not just a few individuals caught and sold, but a whole people. Thousands. Families. Mothers and children included, no doubt.

A whole people uprooted by Philistine slave traders and forced to journey into the land of Edom.

Slave traders. That's been going on over the centuries.

[ 24 : 12 ] It still goes on. I have a big world atlas at home. And if I open my atlas at the map of the western part of Africa, there's a chilling entry on that particular page.

There's a long stretch of coastline in western Africa that stretches from Liberia for about a thousand miles through the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, and then into Nigeria.

And there are four entries on my atlas next to that stretch of coastline. Grain Coast. Ivory Coast. Gold Coast.

Slave Coast. We know who the slaves were and we know who enslaved them. Verse 9.

For three transgressions of Tyre and for four I will not revoke the punishment because they delivered up a whole people to Edom and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.

[ 25 : 14 ] So again, it's a slave trading thing. And again, these slaves are taken to Edom, which was obviously a center of the slave trade. But there's another element mentioned here. An international treaty has been broken.

The people of Tyre have conveniently overlooked what Amos calls a treaty of brotherhood. Now, we know this sort of treaty. It happens today, doesn't it? International leaders get together.

They meet in some important-looking building. They sign papers. They have long discussions. They come out at the end. They smile for the photo opportunity. They shake hands. They kiss each other

on both cheeks. You think that everything is sealed forever.

But a few years later, they act as though the treaty has never been signed. Does that happen today? I don't suppose the Russians could do that, could they? I don't suppose the British could do it, could we?

Don't become a senior diplomat unless you're willing to stand by your promises. Verse 11. For three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not revoke the punishment because he pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity and his anger tore perpetually and he kept his wrath forever.

[ 26 : 28 ] Sometimes, as we know, the worst of quarrels happen within families and this seems to be a case of family hostility. The Edomites were descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob.

Jacob. And if you think of the story in Genesis, Jacob and Esau had a terrible, it wasn't really a row. Esau decided he was going to kill Jacob because he felt that Jacob had robbed him of his birthright, which in a sense he had.

There was a reconciliation between the two brothers many years later. But somehow there seems to have been bad blood between the descendants of Esau and the people of Israel forever afterwards.

The Edomites, this surfaces in various places in the Old Testament, the Edomites seem to have harried and harassed the Israelites whenever they had opportunity. And verse 11 makes the point that there was a constant nagging hatred nursed by the Edomites against Israel.

A perpetual anger. It's a chilling phrase, isn't it? A perpetual anger. Don't we see just that kind of thing in the Muslim world between Shia and Sunni today?

[ 27 : 35 ] An anger that goes on from generation to generation. Doesn't this kind of generational antagonism lie somewhere in the heart of Belfast? Covered over, eased a bit in recent years, but not yet eradicated.

Verse 9 tells us what God thinks of these antagonisms. Verse 13. The Ammonites. I will not revoke the punishment from them because they have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead that they might enlarge their border.

The Ammonites wanted more territory. They wanted more land. So they too marched into Gilead. And they were willing even to rip open pregnant women as they created slaughter and carnage in their thirst for territory.

Now, warfare is one thing. And nations sometimes have to go to war. But this kind of atrocity described here in this verse is a different thing. And I don't need to remind you of the sickening atrocities that are happening every week in different parts of the world today where people are treating each other with unimaginable cruelty.

But verse 13 tells us that God will not fail to punish such things. Chapter 2, verse 1. For three transgressions of Moab and for four, I will not revoke the punishment because he burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom.

[ 29 : 03 ] Now, this verse records an act of sacrilege. It seems that the army of Moab, on one occasion, captured the king of Edom in battle. But they didn't merely execute him and then give his body decent burial.

They then, having killed him, subjected his corpse to the indignity of being burned to powder. Now, we used to behave in just this kind of way, didn't we, in England and Scotland.

It wasn't enough simply to execute an enemy leader. We had to hang him, draw him, and quarter him, chop off his head, stick it on a spike on the city wall so that everybody could look at it and gloat over it.

Now, friends, we have to ask, why should God, as it were, force us to read about these sickening episodes? Did God have to go into all this detail?

Couldn't he just have spoken in more general terms about human wickedness without forcing us to think about these appalling particulars? Well, perhaps we'll help to answer these questions by thinking of the way that Jesus spoke about sin.

[ 30 : 14 ] Jesus did not simply say, the heart of man is nasty and sinful. Jesus went into painful particulars. He said this, out of the heart of man come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

If you were here a week or two ago for the Mark drama, you would have seen that very vividly portrayed. Jesus says, all these things come from within, and they defile a person.

He rubs it home, you see, because naturally, we will always want to avoid thinking quite as starkly about it. The Apostle Paul is just the same. He says this in 2 Timothy, In the last days, people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.

So why does the Bible rub our faces in human sin like this? Wouldn't it be kinder of God simply to say, oh, the human race is a rather imperfect bunch, but I love them all the same?

No, it would not be kinder. If the Bible glossed over our sinfulness with a few words like that, we would never be made to face up to the gruesome depths of which we are actually capable.

[ 32 : 08 ] You and I, friends, we who are sitting here in this building tonight, you and I are capable of murder, rape, atrocity, and violence. And if you haven't yet realized that, you don't know yourself.

But when the Bible begins to expose the ruthless depths of the human heart, we begin to see why we need a savior.

We begin to cry out, Lord, have mercy on me. And then, when we see the savior that God has sent us, we're overwhelmed with a sense of joy and relief that God should have loved us and cared about us so deeply, despite what we are.

The Bible is nothing if not radical. We need a radical diagnosis of our condition. And a book like Amos holds up a mirror to us and helps us to see what we're really like and helps us to see how far our savior had to reach down to us so as to pluck us from the fire, to pluck us from the destruction that we deserve.

Now, let's notice two other things which clearly emerge from this first chapter of the book of Amos. The first concerns the standard by which God judges these pagan nations.

[ 33 : 31 ] Now, these pagan nations, of course, did not have the Old Testament. They didn't have what the people of Judah and Israel had, the revelation of God given to Moses at Mount Sinai. They didn't have the Ten Commandments.

And yet, God holds them responsible and is going to judge them on a basis other than that of the Old Testament law. By what standard, then, does God judge them?

Well, the Apostle Paul helps us here, particularly in Romans chapter 2, where he says, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, the law of Moses, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves.

In other words, they provide a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law of Moses. They show that the work of God's law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts, accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

And you see what Paul is saying there? The Gentile nations don't have the law of Moses, but they have a powerful and sufficient equivalent. God has written the requirements of his law on their hearts and consciences.

[ 34 : 52 ] They don't need the law of Moses to tell them that murder and violence and atrocity are wrong. They know it. It's written into the very nature that God has given them. And by this law, written on their hearts and consciences, God will judge them, and he will judge them fairly.

Now, going back to Amos chapter 1, it's striking that God does not charge any of these Gentile nations with the sin of idolatry. They were, of course, all idolaters, idol worshippers.

That's always been the way of the world. But the sins of Amos chapter 1 are crimes against humanity, the kind of crimes that get tried today at the Court of Human Rights in The Hague, crimes that violate the love and care that nations ought to show to each other.

So, there is a universal standard by which God judges the nations. We cannot charge God, therefore, with unfairness.

The hearts and consciences of every man and woman bear the imprint of what is right and wrong in the sight of God. Then secondly, it's obvious from Amos chapter 1 that God judges not only individuals, but also whole societies and nations.

[ 36 : 12 ] Of course, God was able to identify individual men and women in Damascus or Gaza or Tyre who dissented from the will of their leaders and who sought to live a righteous life.

In just the same way, God identified Lot and his family in Sodom. But the presence of such individuals was not enough to hold back God's judgment.

Surely it's the same today. God knows the hearts of individual men and women, but he assesses and weighs nations, and he will judge each nation and society according to its behavior. There is, therefore, a moral component in human history, and woe betide us if we disregard it. We have a general election coming up in just a couple of weeks, as we know well. We need to ask if our political leaders are seeking in any way to bring genuine moral considerations to bear upon their policies. If they don't, human history becomes merely the product of shifting social and economic forces without anything of the imprint of the law of God upon them. [ 37 : 21 ] And when we listen to some, I wouldn't want to say all, but to some of our political leaders, weaving and ducking as May the 7th approaches, holding out a little economic sweetener here and a tax incentive there.

We have to ask whether godly values play any part in our politics, or whether the whole country has sold its soul to mammon. So, friends, let's take comfort that the Bible shows us that God has a court greater than the court of human rights at The Hague.

No atrocity escapes his notice. No foul policy of oppression or murder is unseen by him. He was not ignorant of the policies of Adolf Hitler or Stalin or Mancey Tung.

He knows how those men and their regimes murdered tens of millions of their own countrymen. He knows the wickednesses of the 20th century and those of the 21st.

Our hearts deeply yearn that justice should be done in relation to all these things. And God shows himself to be a God who deals justly and with true retribution against every horrible deed.

[ 38 : 36 ] It is a great comfort to us to know that things of that kind which seem not to get their redress in this life will be addressed at the end. God is the judge of all the earth.

That's the message of Amos chapter 1. And his judgment did indeed fall on all these Gentile nations some 40 years after Amos' day as the Assyrian armies invaded and subdued all these territories around the promised land including the land of Israel.

Now God is also the judge of his own people and we shall see that next week as we look at the next section in this book. But knowing that God is like this that he sees everything and judges everything how glad we are that he has sent us a saviour who will deliver us on the day of judgment because we are sinful men and women.

Let's pray therefore that many more in our country will turn to that one and only saviour. How that saviour loves us to have done what he has done for us.

And let's be assured he is the only one who is able to deliver us from the wrath to come. Let's pray together.

[ 40 : 02 ] Our dear Lord Jesus our saviour we speak to you this evening and we want to thank you so much that you came that those who come to you and put their trust in you should have life and have it abundantly in all its fullness and glory forgiveness unitedness with yourself and with God the Father and with all those who are redeemed.

And we think of those that uncountable number who are gathered around the throne of grace the throne of of the universe in heaven gathered around you and around God the Father praising you and noticing that the marks of slaughter are still upon you there in the heavenly places.

How we thank you Lord Jesus for saving us from the judgment and we pray that you will give us fresh courage and joy as we declare this good news to many and we ask it to the honour and praise of your great name.

Amen. Amen.