

Dimensions of God's Judgment
Amos 1:11-2:16

1. When a nation is enjoying peaceful and prosperous times can we assume that God is shining His favor upon that land? Why or why not?

Open Your Heart: Sit quietly in His presence and reflect on what you are learning about God.

As noted last week chapters one and two of Amos are a unit; they contain a single prophetic message. Amos 1:3-10 covers the first three nations God singled out for judgment: Damascus, Gaza and Tyre—nations that had no blood ties with the Hebrew people.

2. Scan last week's lesson; then **read** Amos' entire prophecy to the nations from 1:3-2:16. Observe the overall context. *Mark the powerful refrain that continues to bracket the beginning and end of God's prophetic words to each nation.*

Amos shifts his focus in 1:11-15 and his words hit a little closer to home. Edom, Ammon and Moab all had genetic ties to Israel. Yet these three nations had long opposed their Hebrew brothers and had often been at war with them. **Locate** Edom, Ammon and Moab on Map 2. All three nations held territory across the Jordan River.

3. Begin by thoughtfully **rereading** Amos 1:11-12—the prophecy against Edom. *After* you have explored the background Scriptures below, describe the sin of Edom and the corresponding punishment prophesied by Amos.

Edom—Genesis 25:19-34 gives us the genetic relationship of Edom to Israel. The Edomites descended from Esau and the Israelites from Jacob. The book of Genesis outlines in plain language the hostility that existed between Jacob and Esau. Edom soon became a powerful nation (see Genesis 36). When the Israelites came up from the land of Egypt the Edomites denied them passage through their land (Numbers 20:14-21). Nevertheless God commanded Israel to treat Edom as a brother (Deuteronomy 23:7-8). Compare Amos 1:12 with Obadiah 9-10 before answering question 3.

This prophecy of judgment was fulfilled when God summoned the Assyrians and then the Babylonians to wage war on Edom which became a desolate wasteland by the fifth century B.C.

4. How do you think the Israelites responded when they heard Amos' pronouncement on Edom?

Edom's sin and its *final* doom was the special burden of the prophet Obadiah whose short book follows Amos in the canon of Scripture. Written in clear and forceful language the 21 verses of Obadiah offer penetrating insight into the nature of human evil. *Listen to the sovereign voice of God as you read Obadiah 1-14.*

5. What were Edom's crowning sins according to Obadiah 3, 11-12 and 13-14?

Note: *When the Babylonians came against the southern kingdom of Judah in war, Edom joined with them and helped to plunder the city of Jerusalem when it finally fell. Within four years after Jerusalem was burned Edom was raided and desolated by the very same Babylonians who they had aided against Jerusalem.* —B. Haud

Heart Check: Take a few moments to ponder the truth of Proverbs 16:18. Is there a personal application you should make in your life? Do you secretly rejoice when someone else's sin is pointed out and condemned? Pause and confess any sins to God. Ask Him to fill you with true humility—the humility of God Himself.

Ammon and Moab—Genesis 19:30-38 and 12:4-5 give us the genetic link between Ammon, Moab and Israel. Neither country ever shook off the stamp of its origin. Carefully **reread** the prophecies against Ammon and Moab in Amos 1:13-2:3. Although the horrible atrocity committed by the Ammonites is not mentioned in the history books of the Old Testament it was recorded by Amos. (For further background on the Ammonites and Moabites consult 1 Samuel 11:1-3 and Numbers 25:1-3.)

6. In the space below describe the shameful sins of the Ammonites and Moabites revealed in Amos 1:13-2:3. Explain the corresponding judgments that are prophesied.

The nations of Ammon and Moab eventually ceased to exist; also consult Ezekiel 25:2, 8-11.

In the opening chapter of Amos' prophecy we were allowed to look into the raw face of evil—we heard the thundering voice of God's fury and wrath—we witnessed His devastating arm of justice as men and nations were held accountable for their horrendous sins.

7. This type of material is not easy to absorb and process. What questions might fill your heart and mind right now? Take time to list them below. Ask God to unfold His truth to you as we continue our study of the minor prophets.

8. What modern-day atrocities have some nations or individuals been guilty of that resulted in God's unmistakable judgment? Can you provide one or two examples?

We can imagine that Amos' audience was listening with great approval to the verdicts rendered against their hostile neighbors. Slowly and deliberately Amos tightens the noose and turns briefly to Judah—his own nation—the sister state to Israel in the south.

9. **Reread** Amos 2:4-5. What new criteria of judgment is introduced as Judah is charged?

10. How is Judah's crime different from the other nations? Reflect on Exodus 20:3-17 and 24:7-8 before answering.

11. Even though Judah's transgression is different, why do you think the punishment for Judah is the same as for the pagan nations? Consult Romans 2:11-12.

Consider how the attitude of the audience might change as they hear the words: "*For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath*" (2:6).

12. We can almost hear the sadness in God's voice as the LORD speaks through Amos about the sins of Israel. **Reread** Amos 2:6-8. What specifically do these charges reveal?

By contrast the LORD now highlights the gracious benefits which Israel had received from His hand. **Reread** verses 9-12. Notice His pointed question in verse 11. *Reflect on God's loving kindness to Israel in comparison to Israel's sinful behavior towards God.*

13. In what ways does Israel's ingratitude towards God add to her guilt? (For background on the Amorites and Nazarites look up Joshua 24:8 and Numbers 6:1-12.)

In 2:13 Amos foretells in vivid language the punishment that is to come upon Israel: ***“Now then, I will crush you as a cart crushes when loaded with grain.”***

14. How does God illustrate the inevitability of the coming judgment in Amos 2:14-16?

15. What are some ways which individuals, leaders and nations who claim “belief” in Christ shun the Word of God today?

16. Of what are we reminded in Hebrews 2:1-4?

17. As you look back over your completed lesson what truth or concept has challenged the way you think about God? What steps can you take to align your thinking with God’s Word?

For Thought and Discussion: One of the threads that runs through the whole body of biblical prophecy is the multi-faceted dimension of God’s judgment. When God’s Law and His very character have been violated His concern is not simply seeing justice served. His ultimate intention for His people once judgment has accomplished its intended purpose—is restoration. The final expression of the restorative process will be realized with the establishment of God’s future Kingdom. It is important to keep this perspective in mind as we focus on the dimension of God’s judgment.

Finish by reading and enjoying the prophet Zephaniah’s words about the future Kingdom that every true believer will be a part of (Zephaniah 3:14-20). (These concepts will be studied later.)