

The God of Judgment Amos 1:11-15

Hebrews 9

Hebrews 10:1-25

Psalms 29

This morning we are going to pick back up where we left off last week in the first chapter of Amos. Last week we looked at the first 2 judgments of God against Damascus, the capitol of Syria, and Gaza, which was actually the Philistine kings, and cities within that area. In summary of last week, I think the major take away from this first chapter, and these judgments is that God rules and reigns over all the earth, that is whether one believes in him or not does not change whether he deals with you or not. All these judgments are to pagan cities, a people who do not recognize God as God but rather have their own false gods and see the God of Israel as being just that, the God of Israel. But the fact is, he is the God of creation all things exist through him and for him whether or not one believes he does. The pride of mankind is thinking that we can have any other god but the true God, all others are the manifestations of our own creation and mimic aspects of God, for man can not create anything new only generate out of what is already.

This is even true in science, scientific discovery is only learning about what God has created, and new breakthroughs and technology for us, is only learning how to use those things. Fallen man will find anything to believe in, other than God. They will mock our belief, but then turn to mystical ideas about energy waves, and good vibes. They will deny God's sovereignty, yet believe in the concept of random luck and chaos. Or, even worse, is creating a false image and narrative of who God is, cutting away the aspects of his character that they don't like to make a God they desire, this is no different than the golden calf in the wilderness, or the carved idols of the pagan nations. Worshiping a god of your own creation is not worshiping the God of creation, no matter if you call him by the same name or not. We have been given the word of God, in written form spanning generations, and existing for all time and it is by that word, and his spirit given to us that we know him. We need to look at scripture to learn who God is, and when scripture speaks and tells us who he is, we need to listen and not make excuses to cut away the parts we may not like.

What we have been talking about a lot lately in the Minor Prophets here is the judgments of God. This is a concept, and an attribute of God that the modern mind wants to reject, a piece of God they excuse away or carve out leaving a God who doesn't judge, a God who forgives and forgets with no consequence, and no payment. It is a lacking of understanding how truly vile our sins are, this was the entire point of the sacrificial system in the old testament, as Hebrews 9:22 says "according to the law all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission." In the old testament the people were reminded daily of their sinfulness, with the visual sacrifices, the constant shedding of blood and death reminding them of God's wrath upon sinners. But as Hebrews 10 tells us, "in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins, therefore, when he came into the world he said, "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you had no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do your will O God."

All of those things where pictures, where a sign of the true sacrifice, of the true lamb, of the true atonement offered up in the person of Jesus. The modern mind wants to separate the 2, the God of the old testament and the God of the new, or rather say that in these latter days, God has chosen mercy over judgment and punishment.

But the fact is, both remain, mercy was given in the old testament, and judgment remains in the new, the only difference is we now have the fulfillment of all these things, we look to the one who has come, and who has accomplished redemption, just as those who came before were looking to the one to come. Though the mode of the message changed, the message remains the same, death has come upon you because of your sins, but life is found in Jesus. In these old testament passages we get a stark view and are reminded constantly that those who are outside of Christ, face judgment and destruction. The believers of old, held onto faith that God would send his redemption, looking forward to the promised Messiah, the one who would establish his kingdom, who would free his people from their sins, which was all the things the sacrifices and commandments pointed to. The vileness of our sin requiring the shedding of blood to be covered, and the impossibility of reaching God through our own attempt at holiness. So in the old testament we see a stark contrast between “the people of God” and the gentiles.

The descendants of Abraham were given the oracles of God, the message, and signs and symbols, and the promised Messiah. All else, were caught up and lost in their pagan beliefs. This stark contrast carries on to today, between believer, and unbeliever, between the redeemed, and the lost. The message goes out to the lost, repent, and believe, so that your sin and rebellion may be forgiven. You are either a child of God destined for paradise, or a child of Satan destined for hell. These are the words of the bible, this is the message of the bible, and this is the warning within the gospel message, and the warning throughout the entire old testament.

Even if we look at Israel itself, as a nation, their own patterns follow our own, we believe, yet we fall, we have been redeemed, yet we sin. But as we see throughout the old testament God has mercy upon her in all of his dealings, even the suffering that is brought upon them is a mercy for it drives them back to him. But they are never utterly destroyed, there always remains a remnant, he never goes back on his promises and always relents in his judgment upon their repentance. Christians are not perfect, we are much like Israel of old, we sin, we struggle, and though we should not, sometimes we rebel, yet God’s dealings with his people is not like his dealings with the lost. Destruction is never the end, but redemption is always the goal. But that is not always the case in the outsiders, in the lost, as we see throughout these first few chapters of Amos, as God is declaring destruction upon the nations for their sins. And many of these nations are utterly and completely destroyed, leaving nothing left but a history of their existence. Last week we looked at the prophecy against Damascus, and against Gaza, and the fulfillment of both of those recorded in the book of Kings.

God’s judgment may not always be swift, but it is sure, and it is complete. Damascus fell to the Assyrians merely 20 years after this prophecy, but it took a few hundred years for the destruction of the Philistines. This morning we are going to pick up where we left off last week as we continue to see God’s judgment for the sins of the nations, let us go ahead and read starting in verse 11, to the end of the chapter. (read 11-15) We have already seen a prophecy against Edom in the book of Obadiah, where God tells his people who are in captivity that he is going to bring total and utter destruction upon their enemy. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the conflict between the 2 brothers spanned to their offspring and subsequent nations. Edom did not treat the people of Judah, and Israel as their brothers but instead as their enemies, in constant dispute over land, and aiding the enemies in hostility against them.

Looking back at Obadiah, verse 6 says, “Oh, how Esau shall be searched out! How his hidden treasures shall be sought after! All the men in your confederacy shall force you to the border; The men at peace with you shall deceive you and prevail against you. Those who eat your bread shall lay a trap for you. No one is aware of it. Will I not in that day, says the Lord, even destroy the wise men from Edom, and understanding from the mountains of Esau? Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau may be cut off by slaughter. For Violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.”

The utter and total destruction of a people for their sins against their brother, but ultimately it is the sins against God that brings judgment upon them, not recognizing the God of Jacob, rejecting the God of Abraham, and treating his people as enemies. God will not tolerate such injustices forever, he will not allow the destruction of his own people, and in the end no one can stand against the God who created all things, for we are just the created creature subject to him whether we like it or not, whether we believe it or not, it does not change that reality. God will not tolerate injustice forever, and as we see throughout scripture he uses nations to judge nations. As it says in the book of Daniel, chapter 2 “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever For his wisdom and might are his, And he changes the times and the seasons, he removes kings and raises up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.”

We can see this reality happening all through the old testament, the rise and fall of kings, and nations and the word of God says, that it is God who is control of it all. And it isn't as though God uses righteous kingdoms, or righteous kings to judge either, the Assyrian army by which most of what we have talked about here so was the vehicle for the destruction of many of these kingdoms, they were not a righteous people either. This reality, puts a new context in the struggles that we see going on in the world today, we don't have the knowledge, of the foresight, or a prophet giving us insight to the inner workings of what God is doing in this world, but we can rest in the knowledge that ultimately it is God who is working through the nations, to enact his purpose, though it is by human means, and decisions it is God who orchestrates. I don't think that the King of Assyria, or the army believed that they were doing Gods work by utterly destroying some of these other nations, but they were the arm of God in judgment against these people, unjust people, enacting God's just judgment upon unjust people.

There is just no escaping the reality that God's will shall be done, and he sometimes uses the selfish will and desires of mankind to do it. I think to acknowledge this, to understand this concept and to believe it, and ultimately rest in it, is a part of the wisdom that the passage in Daniel is talking about. God sets forth the times and the seasons, he raises up rulers, and tears down rulers, and knowing this should bring a peace, and understanding as we view the world around us through the lens of his sovereignty. Which brings us to verse 13, the next nation under judgment. Which is upon the people of Ammon. God's judgment against them is for their cruelty, as Amos writes, “I will not turn away punishment because they ripped open the women with child in Gilead that they may enlarge their territory.” There is a natural cruelty of war, for it brings death upon people, and subdues people, but some revel in the violence, and seek new ways to bring terror upon the innocent. What is described here is an unnecessary cruelty, a lack of care for innocent life, and unjustified cruelty. But this is not their only sin, as we found out in the story of Ruth, the judgment that was upon the Ammonites because of their lack of Hospitality when Israel were traveling out of Egypt in the wilderness. /

They also were the ones who hired Balaam, the prophet to place a curse upon Israel, but as we all know that story, he was unable to curse them but blessed them instead..again the sovereign work of God, for what man intended for evil, God used for good. The Ammonites were an evil people, they worshiped the false god Mitcom, or otherwise known as Molech, a God associated with child sacrifice, which likely played into the cruelty mentioned here in Amos. Ezekiel prophesied their destruction saying that God will hand them over to the people of the East, and that their capital city shall become a stable for camels and a resting place for sheep. Jeremiah said that the capital shall become a desolate mound and the surrounding villages shall be burned up and that their god would go into exile with the priests and officials signifying a total collapse of their religious and political power. And in Zephaniah, he describes their destruction like Gomorrah, a wasteland of weeds and a pit of salt.”

in BC 580, they were invaded by the Babylonian empire, King Nebuchadnezzar invaded and destroyed Ammon. Following that invasion, over the course of the next 100 years or so, the weakened and vulnerable nation became a home to nomadic Arab tribes, fulfilling the prophesy in Ezekiel saying that shall be taken by the people from the east, overtaking the remaining cities, and turning their kingdom, and their temples into areas for livestock. So again we see it took a few hundred years but the prophesy came true, what God says, is sure and will be accomplished. In these prophesies against these nations we see God’s judgment, he pronouncement of the coming judgment and in other accounts, we see the fulfillment of them with no doubt or apprehension as the very words of the prophesy come true. What this shows us is that God is faithful, he is true to his word, he does not lie, and always accomplishes his will, and his purpose. We can understand this in his dealings with his people as well, with believers, for he promises that he will never lose one, as John 6:36 says, “All that the father gives me shall come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast him out.”

We can trust this as a true saying, as true as these prophesies against the nations of which we have proof of their fulfillment. Verse 39, of John 6 continues this promise, “This is the will of the Father who sent me, that of all he has given me I should lose nothing, ut should raise it up a the last day.” Your salvation is sure, it is complete, it is finished in the person of Jesus. God has promised through his Son to bring redemption to his people, and he can not lie, and he can no fail, and he will not lose one. Further more we get the words of God in scripture where he promises that he will not leave us, Hebrews 13:5 “Let your conduct be without covetousness, be content with the things as you have. For he himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you. So we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, I will not fear, what can man do to me.” This is the hope, and the assurance for us, the word of God is so sure, its as if it has happened through it is yet to come. Our salvation, the fullness of our redemption is awaiting that day when we are united with him in heaven, and though in this life we still yet struggle, though in this life we still yet fail, and though we constantly fall short of what we should be as representatives of Jesus, he is faithful to forgive, he is faithful to forget and not hold it against our account, for it has all been paid once and for all on the cross

There is no greater hope then this, and this reality should bring us great joy, and great peace. As we see God working through the nations, even today, we can rest in knowing that he is in control, that nothing happens outside of his will, and all things work toward his purpose, and that no matter what befalls us in this life, we are secure through him, in the next. We can hold on to these promises, we can be sure of them, for God is not only willing, he is able to complete them. And that I Think is our take away this morning from this passage, though it is in the negative, that is judgments of destruction, we can see that each and every one became a reality, each and every one was fulfilled, and each and every one was fulfilled in God’s time, in the manner he set forth.

So we can rest in the words that he has told us, his children, that he will never leave us, that all who the father has given him will come to him, that he is the great shepherd who cares for his sheep, that we are his people of whom he has gone to prepare a place, that Jerusalem where no stranger or foreigner may enter. It seems we are constantly bombarded with negative news, negative happenings in the world around us, but we only see a sliver of what God is doing, but we can be encouraged and take heart in knowing that it is God who is doing it, it is he who raises up rulers and takes down rulers, it is he who causes the sun to rise and the sun to set, and brings the times and the seasons. God judges the nations, and he uses other nations to do so, we see this in Amos, and we can be sure he still does for he is not an idle God, but he is active within his creation. So our focus, as his people, should be upon the gospel message, should be upon the message of hope that we have been given, a message of hope that transcends the politics of the day, a message that transcends the struggles of the day, for that message secures a hope for a future apart from all this, a hope in a savior who has already conquered death, who has already subdued nations, who has already defeated the devil, for his word is as sure as it having already happened. This is the God whom we trust, this is the God whom we believe, and this is the God who we come to in prayer and worship, a mighty, sovereign God who rules and reigns from on high.