

- Amos series #4

Introduction

- Take this chunk of Amos in three sections:
 - (6:1-7) recap on why this people are facing judgement;
 - (6:8-14) exploration of the nature of God's judgement;
 - (7:1-9) some insight into the timing of God's judgement.
- We'll simply be **working our way through**
 - probably helpful to have a Bible open in front of you if you have one

Judgement: Why? (6:1-7)

- This first chunk recaps on **WHY** God is justified in judging Israel.
- Points:
 - **v.1:** Zion = Jerusalem => Amos' own country, and so **every part of God's people, is subject to God's judgement;**
 - **v.2:** probably quoting arrogant rulers from Samaria: go and look, aren't they inferior! "All is well!"... when all is not well!
 - **v.3:** they were living as if **ignoring judgement would mean it never happened!**
 - **v.4-6:** money for this luxurious lifestyle came from **unfair taxes, from theft, violence, injustice of various sorts;**
(*meat; time for idle music; bowlfuls of wine... over-indulgence!*)
 - **v.7:** the length of Israel's exile meant the nation never re-formed, because it went **first** into exile.
- At heart was their belief/assumption that **God would not judge.**
- But these verses point to **why God WILL judge:**
 - the people's **empty worship** (the shrines we looked at last week);
 - the people's **unjust greed.**
- They went on sinning, despite warnings, despite God's Law.
- **Lived as if there were no consequences for themselves of their actions.**

Judgement: What? (6:8-14)

- If the first section reminded us that God is justified in judging Israel, **this second section declares God's judgement**, in bald, fearsome terms.
- There are **two main components** to that judgement:
 - Exile**
 - **vs. 7/8, 14** - bracketing whole section.
 - This is a pronouncement of the Living, Almighty God:
 - therefore **not** something to be **trifled with.**
 - Serious stuff, since putting into practise the negative consequences of the breakdown of the covenant relationship with his people, taking them out of the land.
 - Gen 12:1 ... **and go to the land I will show you...**
 - Gen 12:7 **The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land."**
 - Gen 13:15 (God to Abram) **All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.**
 - Gen 15:7 **He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."**
 - Gen 26:2-4 **The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed...**
 - Gen 28:13 (at Bethel) **There above it [ladder] stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.**
 - Exo 3:8 **So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land...**
 - Jos 1:10,11 **So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross**

the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own."

- In other words, **exile fundamentally calls into question their very identity as God's people, shakes their security:**
 - they have not kept their end of the covenant, and so God is rescinding the benefits!

Death

- Second component of God's judgement
- **vs. 9-11** - possibly earthquake, though equally possibly result of a crushing military defeat.
 - (Hebrew somewhat obscure....)
- **Population decimated, death proliferating** - even if 10 from a clan are left, they too are doomed to die, there is no hope!
- The place of death is so charged with God's presence, for He is one who brought judgement, that people won't even speak his name for fear of bringing more judgement on themselves!
- **Both death and exile are worked examples of the ultimate judgement, separation from God.**
 - **exile** - separation of a whole people from land, identity, freedom, goodness, family and friends....
 - **death** - separation from loved ones, a gulf that we cannot cross over;
- They were judgements in themselves, but they also serve as **warnings for us of God's ultimate judgement**, not physical exile or physical death, but **total and eternal exclusion from God's presence:**
 - from all that is good, from all beauty;
 - from all relationship, from all family, from all friendship;
 - from all achievement, from all satisfaction;
 - into the the anguish of emptiness and meaninglessness.
- **God's judgement is real - and it is awful!**

Judgement: When? (7:1-9)

- In the third section, God makes it clear through Amos that **while his judgement may be deferred, it will happen.**
- Three pictures are given to Amos:
 - **Locusts** - at worst time for the ordinary people, hay crop devastated;
 - **Fire** - bush fire, leaving land empty of goodness - pictures of a fire from TV images of those sweeping Australia or France...
 - **Plumb-line.**
- In the first two Amos prays, not based on God's relationship with Israel but on Israel's weakness, that God would forgive.
- God only half answers:
 - he holds back his judgement for a time...
 - but he does not forgive, for the people have not repented.
- **God's judgement may well be delayed to allow time for repentance, but that holding back is not indefinite:**
 - **God will bring punishment where people will not repent.**
- All of this points towards:
 - **judgement being held back to allow for repentance, for God is merciful;**
 - **the power of intercessory prayer to affect God's actions;**
 - **the inevitability and rightness of God's judgement** - held off, but not averted.

Conclusion

- **Ouch!**
- That is not an easy word to hear, is it?

- Judgement is real and desperately serious!
- **What should we be learning from all of this?** Two main things...
- **Our own behaviour** should be affected by the reality of God's judgement:
 - a spur to taking God's way out of temptation, 1 Cor 10...
 - *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. (1 Cor 10:12-14)*
 - we dare not presume on God's forgiveness, as if we deserved it... "it doesn't matter what I do, God will forgive..."
- **Our concern for others** should likewise be affected:
 - **through prayer**, to avert judgement and give time for repentance;
 - **through proclamation**, that some might repent and avoid judgement.
- **Sobering stuff**: thought gospel was meant to be good news!
 - but this is a **God who cares about the way we live**, for whom it matters whether we do right or wrong!
- Something deep within us **cannot abide unfairness**, and people getting away with things is unfair!
(*witness the reaction of any small child to perceived unfairness!!*)
- **While all this is sobering, we are able to praise God that he does care how we live, and take that message to those around us who live in a world that does not care what you do...**