

# Lord of All Nations (Amos)



## SABBATH—APRIL 20

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Amos 1–2; Isaiah 58; Luke 12:47, 48; 1 Kings 8:37–40; Amos 4:12, 13; Obadiah.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “A lion has roared. Who isn’t [is not] afraid? The LORD and King has spoken. Who can do anything but prophesy?”<sup>1</sup> (Amos 3:8, NIV).

**KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT:** Acts of cruelty are sins against God. He will judge these acts, and decide how serious they are.

**A LION IN THE BIBLE OFTEN REPRESENTS THE KING OF THE ANIMAL WORLD.** People think of the lion as strong, terrible, mean, destructive, and powerful. The lion can be heard even when it is not hunting. People can hear its roar for miles. Amos, a shepherd, is sent to the Israelites to warn them that he has heard a lion roar. And that the lion is their Lord. Amos is moved by the Holy Spirit. Amos is also a prophet (special messenger). He compares<sup>2</sup> God’s way of speaking to the nations and to His special people with the roaring of a lion (read Amos 1:2).

God calls Amos to prophesy to the nations that are guilty of crimes against other people. Amos is sent to a society where rich and religious people live in peace and comfort. But these same people use the poor and are involved in dishonest business and bribery<sup>3</sup> in court. This week we will learn about what the Lord has to say about these cruel actions.

1. prophesy—to give a message from the Lord to His people; to foretell some future event.

2. compares—shows how two or more things are the same or different.

3. bribery—the act or crime of giving or accepting a bribe.

**SUNDAY—APRIL 21****CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY  
(PEOPLE) (Amos 1, Amos 2)**

**Read Amos 1 and 2. Why does the Lord warn that punishment is coming?**

In the first two chapters of the book of Amos, there are seven prophecies<sup>4</sup> against the nations around Israel. And there is also a prophecy against Israel. The nations around Israel are not judged because they are Israel's enemies. Instead, they are judged because they are cruel and do not follow worldwide principles (important laws). Two things stand out in Amos' scolding: the absence of loyalty and the absence of pity (mercy).

For example, Tyre was a leading merchant city located on the Mediterranean coast north of Israel. Because it was a powerful island fortress (fort), the city boasted of its safety. And the leaders of Tyre made peace treaties with several neighboring nations, such as the Philistines. The city had an agreement with Israel by a "treaty of brotherhood" during the time that David and Solomon ruled (1 Kings 5:1, 12) and during the time of King Ahab (1 Kings 16:30, 31). Hiram, the king of Tyre, called Solomon "my brother" in 1 Kings 9:13.

But the people of Tyre broke the "covenant [agreement] of brothers." Tyre was not condemned (criticized) for taking the people of Israel away as



**Tyre was a leading merchant city located on the Mediterranean coast north of Israel.**

prisoners. Tyre was scolded for handing them over to Israel's enemies, the Edomites.<sup>5</sup> So, the people of Tyre were responsible for the cruelties that these prisoners suffered at the hands of their enemies. To God, the person who assists and supports a crime is as guilty as the person who does it.

Because God is all-powerful, He holds the destiny (future) of all the world in His hands. He has purposes and concerns that reach far beyond Israel's borders. This is because the God of Israel is the Lord of all nations. All human history is His concern. He is the Creator God. He gives life to all, and all are responsible to Him.

**Who does not get angry at the injustice he or she witnesses in the world? If there were no God, what hope would we have of justice ever being done? The Bible promises that God will bring justice and judg-**

4. prophecies—special messages from God, often explaining what will happen in the future.

5. the Edomites—people who were Esau's descendants, living southeast of Israel.

ment to the world. What does this mean to you? How can we learn to hold on to that promise while we are surrounded by injustice?



God holds the destiny of all the world in His hands.

## MONDAY—APRIL 22

### JUSTICE FOR THE OPRESSED<sup>6</sup> (Isaiah 58)

God's judgment<sup>7</sup> is one of the central teachings found in Amos. In the beginning of his book, Amos announces God's judgment against several of Israel's neighbors because of their crimes against people.

Amos also boldly declares that God also will judge Israel. So, his book shows that the Lord is angry, not only at the nations but also at the people He has chosen. For example, the people of Judah turned away from the Word of the Lord and did not follow His instructions.

However, Amos scolds Israel much more than he scolds Judah.<sup>8</sup> This is

because Israel has broken God's covenant (agreement) and is guilty of so many sins. Israel's riches and political practices (customs) lead to spiritual decay. This spiritual decay shows itself in social injustice. In Israel, the rich used the poor, and the powerful took advantage of the weak. The rich cared only for themselves and their personal wealth even when the poor were suffering. (Overall, not much has changed with the world in a few thousand years, has it?)

In his preaching, Amos teaches that there is a living God who cares about how we treat others. Justice is not just an idea. Justice is God's concern. The prophet warns that Israel's stone houses, ivory furniture, good food and drink, and the best body lotions will all be destroyed.

**Read Isaiah 58. How does this chapter show various parts of present truth? How is our message to the world much more than what is in this chapter?**

The Bible clearly teaches that social justice should be a natural outgrowth (result) of living the gospel. As the Holy Spirit makes us more like Jesus, we learn to share God's concerns. The books of Moses teach the fair treatment of foreigners, widows, and orphans (Exodus 22:21–24). The prophets speak of God's concern about the fair and merciful treatment of poor people (Isaiah 58:6, 7). The psalmist calls

6. oppressed—people who are treated in a cruel or unfair way.

7. judgment—decision as to whether or not someone is or is not guilty of sin.

8. Israel and Judah—in Amos' time Israel was divided into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

the God who lives in His holy temple “a father to those whose fathers have died. He takes care of women whose husbands have died” (Psalm 68:5, NIV). Christ showed great concern for those who were unwanted by society (Mark 7:24–30; John 4:7–26). And the Lord’s brother James calls on us to put our faith into action by helping the needy (James 2:14–26). So, no follower of Christ can fail to do anything and really be a follower of Christ.



Amos warned that all of Israel’s riches would be destroyed.

## TUESDAY—APRIL 23

### THE DANGER OF BEING RICH (Amos 3:1, 2)

The prophecy of Amos was not to be limited to Israel but to apply to all of us in the future. In the Old Testament, Israel had a special claim on God. But Israel’s claim was not the only claim. Others had a claim on God too.

Read Amos 3:1, 2. The Hebrew verb *yada*, “to know,” is used in verse

2. It means a special sense of closeness. For example, in Jeremiah 1:5 God says that He “knew” the prophet and set him apart even before his birth. The same was true for Israel. Israel was not just another nation among nations. Rather, God set Israel apart for His special purpose. Israel stood in special relationship with Him.

God Himself had chosen the people of Israel and freed them from slavery. Their escape from Egypt was the single most important event in the beginning of Israel’s history as a nation. It opened the way for God’s acts of salvation. God helped Israel to conquer the land of Canaan. But Israel’s strength and success led to false pride.

**Read Christ’s statement from Luke 12:47, 48. How should we understand the principle (important rule) Jesus taught there: that when people abuse their special rights in life, God will punish them?**

The Holy Spirit leads the prophet Amos to warn the people of Israel that they will be held responsible for their actions because they are the Lord’s chosen people. The Lord is saying that Israel’s special relationship with God carries responsibilities. But punishment will follow if they abuse their responsibilities. Israel was not chosen just to enjoy the special honor only. Israel was called to be a witness to the world about the Lord who had so blessed them.

**“The churches of Christ today are honored with the deepest blessings and privileges [special rights]. The Lord has been giving us ever-increasing light. Our privileges are far greater than were the privileges of the people of Israel.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 317. Think about all that we have been given as Seventh-day Adventists. Why should the responsibilities that come with these special rights make us shake with awe [respectful fear]? Do they, or have we just gotten used to them? Have we even become lazy with all that we have been given? If so, how can we change?**

### WEDNESDAY—APRIL 24

#### ISRAEL’S DAY OF MEETING WITH GOD (Amos 4:12)

**“Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel” (Amos 4:12).**

Chapter 4 of Amos begins with the description of Israel’s sins. And it ends with the announcement of the day when Israel will stand before God to receive the reward or punishment for what it has done. The announcement shows that God makes His people responsible for how they live and treat others.

Amos has made a list of natural disasters (sudden misfortunes). Any one of them should have been enough to turn the nation to God. The list includes seven disasters.

They are the full measure of punishment for the breaking of God’s covenant (agreement). (Read the words of Moses from Leviticus 26.) Some of the disasters remind us of the plagues God sent against Egypt. The description of the last disaster mentions how Sodom and Gomorrah were completely destroyed.

**According to Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8:37–40, what should disasters and great misfortune normally lead people to do?**

The people of Israel were not behaving as normal people anymore. And God found it impossible to get their attention. God’s judgments had led to the hardening of the people’s hearts. Because the people failed to return to the Lord, Amos gave one last chance for repentance.<sup>9</sup>

Israel’s final judgment is coming. But Amos does not say what the judgment would be. The “hidden” warning of Amos’ words makes the threat of judgment even more threatening. Israel has failed to return to God; so, God goes out to meet Israel. But if punishment fails, will God’s people be saved if they face His judgment?

Amos 4:12 begins with the words “ ‘People of Israel, I will punish you’ ” (NirV). This is written the way that oaths are usually written. This serious warning requires Israel to prepare to meet its God as it did before God appeared to its people at Sinai (Exodus 19:11, 15).

9. repentance—the act of feeling sorry for your sins and turning away from sinning with the help of the Holy Spirit.



Read carefully Amos 4:12, 13. If you suddenly heard the warning, “Prepare to meet your God, O [your name here],” what would be your answer? What is your only hope? Read Romans 3:19–28.

### THURSDAY—APRIL 25

#### THE PRIDE THAT LEADS TO A FALL (Obadiah 3)

Read the book of Obadiah. What important spiritual truths can we learn from this book?

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. It describes Obadiah’s vision of God’s judgment upon the land of Edom. The book focuses on three issues: (1) Edom’s proud and stubborn attitude (verses 1–4), (2) Edom’s coming punishment (verses 5–9), and (3) Edom’s war against Judah (verses 10–14).

The Edomites were the descendants (children) of Jacob’s brother, Esau. The bitter war between the Israelites and the Edomites started with a family quarrel between the twin brothers (Jacob and Esau). These brothers later became the fathers of the two nations, Israel and Edom. But Genesis 33 shows that the two brothers made peace with each other. So, the Israelites were commanded by God not to “hate the people of Edom. They are your relatives” (Deuteronomy 23:7, NlrV).

But the war between the two nations continues for many hundreds of years. When Babylon destroys Jerusalem and makes its citizens

slaves, the Edomites celebrate. They even attack the fleeing Israelites and also help to destroy Jerusalem (Psalm 137:7). Because of this, the prophet Obadiah warns that Edom would be judged by God. “‘Others will do to you what you have done to them’” (Obadiah 15, NlrV). The Edomites do not act as brothers toward the people of Judah in their worst hour. Instead, they join the Babylonians in destroying Jerusalem (Lamentations 4:21, 22).

Edom is located southeast of the Dead Sea. It is a mountainous land filled with high peaks, deep valleys, and caves where armies could hide. A number of Edomite cities were located in these hard-to-reach places. Sela (also known as Petra) was Edom’s capital city. The nation developed false pride that Obadiah wrote about when he asked the question, “‘Who will bring me [Edom] down to the ground?’” (Obadiah 3, NKJV).



The two brothers later made peace.

God holds responsible people who use others in their time of need and trouble. Obadiah warns the proud people of Edom that God would destroy their false pride. There is no place to

escape from the Lord (Amos 9:2, 3). The coming day of the Lord will bring both judgment and salvation. Edom will experience God's angry punishment while God's people will be restored (established again).

### FRIDAY—APRIL 26

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read the following quotations and discuss how they help us to understand the messages from Amos 1–4 and Obadiah more clearly.

“From the beginnings of Israelite religion the Israelites believed that God had chosen them to carry out His mission. This belief has been both a cornerstone [important foundation] of Hebrew faith and their safety in moments of trouble or danger. And yet, the prophets believed that to many of the people around Israel this cornerstone was a stumbling block or an escape. The prophets had to remind the Israelites that they must not think that they were God's favorites and would be excused from punishment. Instead, they must expect more serious punishment. . . .

“Does being God's chosen people make God more concerned with Israel? Does the Exodus from Egypt suggest that God is involved only in the history of Israel and does not care about what happens to other nations? No, this is not true!”—Adapted from Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, pages 32, 33.

“With the defenses of the soul broken down, the worshipers had no protection against sin. And they surrendered themselves [gave in] to the

evil desires of the human heart.

“Against unfairness, injustice, too much wealth and drunkenness, and sexual sin, the prophets lifted their voices. But they failed in their protests against sin. Amos declared to Israel, ‘You hate those who do what is right in court. You can't [cannot] stand those who tell the truth. . . . You crush those who do what is right. You accept money from people who want special favors. You take away the rights of poor people in the courts.’ Amos 5:10, 12 [NirV].”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, page 282.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① It is easy to be friendly with someone who has something to offer you. What about those who are in trouble and need what you can give them? What kind of attitude (feeling) must we show toward such people? What kind of attitude do you show toward them?
- ② Think about all that we have been given as Seventh-day Adventists. Most Christians have no idea about the blessings of the Sabbath. They do not even think much about its end-time importance. Most think that the dead go either immediately to heaven or to the torments of hell. Many do not believe in the real return to life of Jesus. Many do not believe in a real Second Coming. What other great truths have we been given that most other people do not know about? What responsibilities come with having these truths?