

AMOS & MICAH

when religion isn't enough—

an attempt at an understanding of justice & how to apply it

2 prophets—the same message

- Preached at close to the same time (mid 700's BC).
- Amos was primarily a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and he prophesied prior to them being conquered by Assyria that had relapsed into evil after the brief revival under Jonah. As a nation they were taken captive to never return to the land.
- Micah prophesied to the Southern Kingdom of Judah either as this was going on or shortly after.
- Again, all happened in real places and before we continue, let's look at the physical setting of their prophecies to get more of a sense of what it was like.

Imagine if this happened in S. California.....

- In terms of similar land mass and proximity to one another, it was as if in CA—Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara Counties were destroyed, and Ventura and LA Counties were left to watch what happened.
- Israel was destroyed because of their sin, blotted out as a nation; taken captive.
- But knowing and seeing all that happened, did that change the actions or attitudes of the Southern Kingdom?
- We'll answer in a bit, but first a few more historical anchors before we get into the books themselves.

Historical markers from this time to help ground our lesson in reality

- Far from fairy tales or vague spiritual histories, many of the prophets start with clear historical markers as you'll see in the quote below and then in archeological tidbits I'll share.
- The author of Amos, (the prophet himself) provides several in his introduction—
- ***The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa—the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel.***
Amos 1:1
- He talks about an earthquake and lists the name of a current king.
- This listing of kings and/or specific events helps us put together the timeline that gives us the proper historical context of the prophet's message.
- **Historical markers like these help us check the prophetic reliability of the message as we must have accurate dates to see if what they prophesy truly is from God—the historical markers in one book record when the prophecy was given and in many cases the historical markers in another book show when it was fulfilled—evidence that only a God outside of history could have given the message.**

Archeological verifications

- Evidence of earthquake described:
- *Archaeologists have found massive amounts of earthquake damage in*

sites throughout the ancient kingdoms of Judah, Israel and the Philistines. This earthquake damage dates to around 760 B.C.E., right around the latter third of Uzziah's reign. Tilted walls, collapsed floors and more are attributed to this earthquake. So great is the amount of evidence, that scientists have been able to determine the epicenter was likely in Lebanon, and that its strength was probably around a magnitude 8.2 and lasted 90 seconds. <https://watchjerusalem.co.il/479-uziah-uncovering-a-king-of-judah>

Also discovered a seal and plaques with Uzziah's, (Azariah's) name
Important as these evidences are, this isn't an archeology or apologetics lesson

- But again, it is important to remember that the Bible speaks to us in real-life situations and with the location and time verified, here is what was happening.....
- The times were ones of political turmoil.
- In relatively wealthy, prosperous nations—in Israel from the spoils of successful wars.
- Yet, an ecological disaster—the earthquake and what followed from it.
- Spiritual decline—though—and this is important — **there was significant outward spiritual activity, but interpersonal injustice and unkindness.**
- Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Into this world God first sends His Prophet Amos to preach primarily to Israel

- Name means: Burden-bearer.
- From Judah, sent north to Israel.
- He was not formally trained.
- He was a shepherd and farmer.
- But because of the power of his preaching, he has been called “the first Great Reformer.”

A little later, God calls Micah

- He is called to preach from the Southern part of Judah.
- Like Amos, he was not from the city or the royal court like Isaiah.
- He appears to have worked in a rural area, no “school of the prophets” or other training listed.
- Yet intimately aware of the injustices between the wealthy and the poor.

Notes on God's calling on both Amos and Micah

- God's callings can be unpredictable and are not dependent at all on earthly or socially accepted standards of who can serve in what ways.
- If God calls you to something, He believes you can do it, and that is the only thing that matters.
- Today anyone can start a podcast, a blog, do YouTube videos to share God's message to our world.
- Your audience may not be large and you most likely won't make much of an income, but if you feel called, go for it!
- Now to the messages they were called to preach, Amos, then Micah.

Amos begins his prophecies by pronouncing judgement on the surrounding nations

- **It is a reminder that all are accountable to basic laws, as Rom. 1 reminds us as do numerous prophets.**
- **Following are the sins of the nations surrounding Israel:**
- Damascus, for cruelty in war

- Tyre, who sold 'their brothers'
- Gaza, slave traffic
- Ammon, excessive cruelty in war
- Edom, anger, fury to brother
- Moab, excessive vengeance
- And to their fellow Jews in Judah, idolatry
- **God' expectations of humanity are universal—there are no excuses for cruelty, injustice to others.**

Now more to Israel

- ***"To whom much is given, much is required" Luke 12:48***, as a nation they were wealthy and strong, and yet....
- Because they were chosen by God, they deserve greater judgment, ***"You I have chosen" Amos 3:2 "therefore I will punish"*** Their wrongs are detailed in c in. 2,3 and they include:
 - Trample poor
 - Injustice in many areas of life
 - Idol worship
 - Forbid prophets to speak
 - Excessive drinking
 - Self-indulgence
- *Amos 4: 1 Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, "Bring us some drinks!"*
- And then he goes on to pronounce God's judgment on them for this selfish, self-absorption, and injustice.

Additional verses

- Amos 2:6 "For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not relent. They sell the innocent for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. ⁷They trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed. . . . ⁸They lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge. In the house of their god they drink wine taken as fines.
- ⁹"Yet I destroyed the Amorites before them,....
- ¹⁰I brought you up out of Egypt...
- ¹¹"I also raised up prophets from among your children and Nazirites from among your youths. Is this not true, people of Israel?" declares the Lord. ¹²"But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets not to prophesy—

And the result of these actions

- *These are the words of my Master God.*
"I'll send a famine through the whole country.
It won't be food or water that's lacking, but my Word.
People will drift from one end of the country to the other,
roam to the north, wander to the east.
They'll go anywhere, listen to anyone,
hoping to hear God's Word—but they won't hear it." Amos 8:11-12
- ***What people need most, they cut themselves off from hearing—though always available to them—how and when do we do the same?***

They tried to fix it with religious practices

- But it was a religion mixed with idolatry.
- Jeroboam I many years before had set up two golden calves at Bethel and Dan, after kingdom split, where the people worshipped them as well as Jehovah.
- The continuation of this and similar practices is what Amos railed against.
- God's response to religious actions through Amos:
 - *"I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me.*
 - *Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,*
I will not accept them.
 - *Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,*
I will have no regard for them.
 - *Away with the noise of your songs!*
I will not listen to the music of your harps." **Amos 5:21-2**
- ***We need to ask ourselves, do we go to church and then worship our idols of self-indulgence, selfishness, lack of care for the less fortunate?***

Response God wants

- *Hate evil, love good;*
maintain justice in the courts.
Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph. **Amos 5:14-15**

***But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!***

Amos 5:24

This call for justice is primary

- In this and other books of prophecy as we'll see.
- That raises the important question,
"What is justice?"
- ***And what does it mean to put that into practice?***
- We'll explore the answer in a minute, but first very briefly how Micah continues similar challenges that show more deeply the need for justice.

Historical setting of Micah

- Micah begins by listing specific sins of both the northern and southern kingdoms. These sins include:
 - Idolatry (Micah 1:7; 5:12–14);
 - The seizure of property of the less fortunate (Micah 2:2, 9);
 - The failure of civil leadership (Micah 3:1–3, 9–10; 7:3), religious leadership (Micah 3:11), and prophetic leadership (Micah 3:5–7, 11);
 - Offering sacrifice without truly repenting (Micah 6:6–7);
 - Corrupt business practices and violence (Micah 6:10–12).
- List from the Bible.net

***In view of this condemnation, the people respond, rather petulantly it seems—
What does God want?***

- *Micah⁶:6 With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (a pagan practice)*

- **God's answers in Micah 6:8:**
He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

- Let's explore what this means.

"To do justice"

Justice is primary and a foundation because....

- Justice is primary and a foundation because ***Justice is a central attribute of God's nature***—
- It reflects His righteousness, fairness, and faithfulness. Scripture teaches that God is "a God of justice" (Isaiah 30:18) and that His ways are "perfect" and "just" (Deuteronomy 32:4) . This means His justice is not arbitrary but rooted in His unchanging character, ensuring that all people are held accountable for their actions.
From [www/ biblestudyforyou.com](http://www/biblestudyforyou.com)
- God's justice isn't simply a legal, rules making term—it has the sense of equity, fairness, mutual care and respect which is what we see modeled in the three Persons of the Trinity.
- Because that is the model of our God, we should reflect it in our relationships with each other.

But justice does not stand alone

- God's justice is inseparable from His love and mercy. It is both **protective and corrective**—He defends the righteous, restores the broken, and punishes evil (Psalm 35:5; Proverbs 21:15) At the same time, His justice is meted out in ways that also reveal His compassion, as seen in the cross, where sin was punished in Christ while mercy was extended to all who believe (Romans 3:25–26) from [Sermon Information](#) and [GotQuestions.org](#)
- Since we are to be a reflection of God's character and justice is a key part of that, let's explore it, how we are supposed to live it out and the other characteristics in Micah 6:8 in more detail.

Acting Justly—is a way of life, not a singular action

- ***It is the Hebrew word, "mishpat" and has to do with ALL God's laws—it is a reflection of His character.***
- ***Leviticus 18:4(KJV)Ye shall do my judgments, (mishpat) and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.***
- Not only **in** ALL of life, the idea also is that justice is **for** ALL people, not just the rich and powerful.
- Following are just a few of the verses that support this.

Verses on Justice—many, many throughout the Bible, many in connection with the less fortunate

- *Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute, Psalm 82:3*
- *Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in*

your heart. Zac.7:9-10

- *Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.*
Amos 5:15
- *Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!*
Psalms 106:3
- ***He gave justice and help to the poor and needy, and everything went well for him. Isn't that what it means to know me?" says the LORD.***
Jeremiah 22:16

Additional notes on Justice, from Christianity Today

- ***Justice flows from God's heart and character. As true and good, God seeks to make the object of his holy love whole. This is what motivates God throughout the Old and New Testaments in his judgments on sin and injustice. These judgments are both individual and corporate in scope.***
- Biblical justice involves making individuals, communities, and the cosmos whole, by upholding both goodness and impartiality. It stands at the center of true religion, according to James, who says that the kind of "religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" ([James 1:27](#)). Earlier Scripture says, "The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern" ([Prov. 29:7](#)). From *Christianity Today*.

"Love Mercy"

- **Characteristic of God: Deuteronomy 7:9** therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant **and mercy** with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;
- **Mercy is required from us if we want mercy: James 2:13** Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.
- **Part of wise living: Proverbs 3:3** Let not **mercy and truth** forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

Without mercy. . . .

- ***God's covenant, his power, his laws and his truth and even his justice can be unbearably harsh.***
- We can never think of or practice justice alone without mercy—if we do that, if we think we are justified in punishing others for their perceived sins we will become like the nations Amos prophesied against who were taking out long-standing revenge to Israel.
- We are to practice justice with mercy, not be the judge...and to do this,
- The final characteristic is needed.....

"Walk humbly with your God"

- Humility isn't just a one-time action—e.g. being "humble" in a certain circumstance.
- Walking implies a way of life. Whatever you walk in defines your life.
- Negative examples—
- Ps 78: 10 They kept not the covenant of God, and refused **to walk** in his law;
- Psalm 89:30³⁰⁻³³ If his children forsake my law and **walk** not in my

judgments;³¹If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; (results of that walk)Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.

Walking with God, positive examples

- **Genesis 5:22** *And Enoch walked with God* after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: (and one day he simply walked into the presence of God.)
- **Genesis 6:9** These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and ***Noah walked with God.***
- **Genesis 17:1** And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, ***I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.*** (meaning to be complete).

The opposite of “walking humbly” can be pride and as C.S. Lewis says

- *As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.*
- *That raises a terrible question. How is it that people who are quite obviously eaten up with Pride can say they believe in God and appear to themselves very religious? I am afraid it means they are worshiping an imaginary God.*
- The true God is very different as we see....

In Jesus

- Our God doesn't simply command we be humble, he modeled it as this passage says:
- ***Phil.2:5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:***
- ***⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!***
- Satan is the one who said, “I will ascend.”
- If we abandon humility or if seeking a high position is our primary concern, we are reflecting the enemy, not God.

It all comes together here—

- ***When we are walking humbly, we see the needs of others and the inequities in our world, we then respond with mercy as we can, and with the justice we are able to affect.***
- In contrast, when we are proud, when our attitude is not merciful, we don't see or emphasize with the needs of others.
- But if our heart breaks when others are in need or are treated poorly, we may not know what to do, we may not know the exact way to practice justice, but we will figure out something remembering that just because we can't do everything, we can do something.
- And the something that we do for one person....
- ***Jesus takes very personally—see Matthew 25.***

Matthew 25

- “But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne.”
- ³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’
- ³⁷ “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? ³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’
- ⁴⁰ “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’

This kind of active godliness is a distinctive of the Christian faith

- **In contrast: Deepak Chopra (and similar teachers) believe:** “Saintliness becomes realistic by seeing it as a state of higher consciousness.”
- In other words, striving for a holy life is all about me.
- ***That is NOT true. Saintliness, holiness, becoming “set apart” like our God and working to be His walking talking representatives involves the pursuit of an active lifestyle reflected in Micah 6:8, where we (in review)—***
- “Act justly” act in line with all of God’s law for all people,
- “Love mercy” —as intensely as we seek love, we care about being kind to others,
- “Walk humbly” —as a way of life and peacefully accepting our position as beloved servants of God, our brothers and sisters, and our world.

Final challenges of Amos and Micah for us—

- ***Remember justice and care for others, especially the downtrodden, is not optional, but a core expectation of God’s people because it is a foundational reflection of the character of our God and emphasized in these books and many others throughout the Bible.***
- Though important, we need to remember that religious observances do not take the place of justice, mercy, and humility in our daily lives.
- That when we do practice justice, mercy, and humility, it does make a difference in our world today and we can look forward to the day when, with the prophets who so fearlessly preached, we will hear these words:
- *“ Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Matt. 25:40*

For more materials related to the Bible, go to: www.bible805.com