

Dr. Gary Yates, Book of the 12, Session 8, Amos, Judgment on the Nations

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his lecture series on the Minor Prophets. This is session 8, The Judgment on the Nations.

Amos chapters one and two. In our study of the book of Amos so far, we've taken a look at the major themes and theology of the book.

I want to begin in this lesson, working our way a little more systematically through the book. Remember that one of the key contributions of the prophets is that they challenge, they enlarge, and they expand our understanding and our view of God. Particularly in our culture that simply wants to view a God who is love and acceptance and forgiveness.

We're reminded in the prophets of that other side of God, his anger, his holiness, his wrath, and both sides of God's character are something that are emphasized in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. This idea of God being a holy God is not just something that's in the Old Testament. We're also reminded of that in the New Testament.

The book of 1 Peter gives us the instruction, be holy for I am holy to the people of God today, in the same way that Moses gave that instruction to the people of Israel and Leviticus. Hebrews reminds us that our God is a consuming fire. A sermon in the book of Acts reminds us that in the times of ignorance in the past, during the Old Testament era, God overlooked people's ignorance.

But now he commands in light of the death of Jesus and in light of the revelation of his son, he commands that all people repent. So sometimes, we have the idea that the God of the Old Testament is more stern, more angry, and more righteous than the God of the New. In some ways, we may see that the God of the New Testament is even more demanding.

But in Amos, we begin with this opening statement about God. The Lord roars from Zion, and he utters his voice from Jerusalem. He is a roaring lion, and he's a thundering storm.

That statement and those images of God remind me of a quote from Annie Dillard from several years ago that I would like to read, just reminding us of the power and the awesomeness and the greatness of God. She says this, does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with chemistry

sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear lady's straw hats and velvet hats to church.

We should all be wearing crash helmets. Usher should issue life preservers and signal flares. They should lash us to our pews.

For the sleeping God may awake someday and take offense or the waking God may draw us out to where we can never return. And I think that's what we have going on in the book of Amos. Amos is reminding the people of Israel that the sleeping God is about to awake.

And the God that they have taken for granted really is like a roaring lion in a thundering storm. As we begin to work our way systematically through the book of Amos, one of the struggles and one of the problems that I think modern readers have with the prophets is sometimes trying to find out the order and the structure and the chronology of these books. One writer has commented that the problem that we have with books like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel is that they do not read as books in the modern sense of the term.

There is not a table of contents at the beginning to orient us. These are not like the books that I read on my Kindle, where I have nice neat little sections. They do not follow a clear chronology.

And maybe the closest thing that we can imagine to a prophetic book is a pastor who has ministered or preached sermons for 30 or 40 years at a church and someone compiling an anthology of those messages. And not always arranging them by chronology or by the periods or time of that pastor's ministry, but simply stitching them together in an odd way. And that is what we often seem to have in the prophets.

With Amos, we may have ten years of ministry, perhaps summarized in an anthology of nine chapters. Martin Luther, in a way that only Luther could say this, makes this comment about the prophets. He says the prophets have a queer way of talking.

Like people who, instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble off from one thing to the next so that you cannot make head or tail of them and what they are getting at. And my students often, on exams when we're dealing with prophetic books, reflect that sentiment back to me when the exam is over. So, how do we structure a prophetic book? How do we order it? How do we recognize the arrangement? That's often a challenge.

I think in the book of Amos we have, however, a fairly clear structure. And I'm going to look at this book in three sections. Chapters one and two are going to deal with God's judgment of the nations.

We have God dealing with eight different nations and God's judgment of those people. The judgment in that section culminates with God's people: first, Judah, the southern kingdom, and then Israel, the northern kingdom.

That's chapters one and two. In chapters three to six, we have an expanded reflection and explanation on the judgment of Israel. And we have a reminder and an explanation of why God is judging his people.

We have a warning of how severe and serious this judgment is going to be. It's going to be an exile. It's going to be a military defeat.

Israel is going to be like a remnant that is ripped out of the mouth of a lion. Ninety percent of the people are either going to die or be taken away in exile. And so, it expands on the picture of judgment.

But while the judgment is coming and while there's the possibility and the likelihood that this is what is going to happen, God is still giving the opportunity for the people to repent. And so, particularly in chapter five, there are a number of calls to repent with the positive motivation: this is what God will do for you if you do repent. The judgment can be avoided, but if you do not repent, here's the calamity and the disaster that God is going to bring upon you.

So, Amos is going to say, seek the Lord and live. Seek good and do what is right. Let justice roll down like a river.

If you will do that, there's the possibility that this awful judgment can be avoided. Finally, in chapters seven to nine, we have a series of five visions. Often, God would reveal the future or the message that he had the prophet communicate to the people in a visual way, whereas the prophet would actually see a vision often portrayed in a symbolic way.

And the images in that vision would convey the message that the prophet was to then relate to the people. And so, we have a series of five of those. They're dealing with judgment.

They culminate with the vision in chapter nine that portrays the judgment of Israel as an earthquake that destroys the temple and the sanctuary representing the people of God and the nation of Israel. I think it's a very effective way for the book to end because, remember, Amos 1:2 tells us that Amos ministered in Israel two years before the earthquake. The earthquake that God sent on the people was a warning shot of the judgment that was to follow.

So, the final vision takes this idea of God as a storm, the idea of an earthquake, and it pictures Israel as a sanctuary or as a temple that is collapsing down, and God's judgment is going to come. In the middle of those five visions, there's a narrative section. The narrative section deals with the call of Amos and the response that the people of Israel had to the message of Amos reflected in the words of the priest Amaziah, who orders Amos to go back to Judah, to stop preaching, to stop speaking against the king's sanctuary.

And the fact that Israel rejects this message, the fact that the leadership stood in opposition to what Amos is going to say, ultimately that's why God will bring judgment. The final piece of Amos chapters 9, verses 11 to 15, is an appendix that offers a message of hope that after this judgment is over, God is going to restore the people of Israel. It looks beyond just the judgment of the northern kingdom.

It talks about the collapse of the house of David. And so, Judah is going to experience this judgment as well. But once the judgment has come, there is going to be a restoration where Israel will be securely established in the land.

God will reestablish the Davidic dynasty as well. And God is going to pour out on his people the blessings that he had originally promised to give them in the covenant. So that's the structure of Amos.

We're going to look at chapters 1 to 2, 3 to 6, 7 to 9. I'd like to begin by looking at this section, the opening section of the book in chapters 1 to 2, where we have Amos presenting for us God's judgment of the nations. What strikes us in these first two chapters is the reminder that God is not just the God of Israel. He's not just the God of Judah.

He's not just the God of his chosen people, but he is the sovereign God and Lord over all the nations. And that gives him the right and the authority to judge those nations. I believe that this is a clear reflection of Israel's monotheistic belief.

They do not believe that the other gods of these people have rulership and authority over the nations. Yahweh, the God of Israel, the one true God, ultimately judges all nations, and all peoples are accountable to him. This is an amazing thing.

Israel is this tiny state, the size of, at times, the state of New Jersey. It occupies that kind of area. And yet these people have the audacious belief and the pretentious idea that their God is the judge over all nations.

The gods of Assyria that seem to be so powerful, they're not the ones that the nations answer to. The nations answer to the Lord. And so, the gods of Assyria, the gods of the Egyptians, the gods of the Babylonians, those gods are nothing compared to Yahweh because Yahweh is ultimately the judge.

It's also interesting for us to notice the arrangement of the eight judgment speeches that are found here. I think the prophet here reflects a very skillful use of rhetoric. Aristotle said that the key to good communication and to good speaking involves logos, pathos, and ethos.

The prophets definitely have a powerful ethos. It's the Torah and it's God's revelation and God's holiness. They definitely have pathos because they speak with passion because of the urgency of their message.

But they also use the rhetoric of logos to communicate their message and to make sure that the people clearly heard what they were trying to say. The prophets had the same problem that many of us have as pastors on Sunday morning. The people that we are speaking to have heard it all many, many times before.

And we notice sometimes on Sunday morning that they're not always energetic listeners. Well, the prophets had the same problem. The people had been hearing prophetic warnings of judgment and call to repentance all the way back to the time of Elijah and Elisha.

How do I make these people listen? And so often, the prophets gave, I think, significant attention to how we communicate this message as much as they did to what they were the essential core of the message. I believe that as pastors, we don't rely on our rhetoric. We don't rely on human words of persuasion, Paul says in Corinthians.

But it is important for us to pay attention to how we communicate our message. Sometimes as a pastor, I think it helps for me to think about who are five people I know that would have a significant issue with the message that I'm trying to present this morning. And if they were sitting out in my audience and they were listening to me, what would I want to say to them to make them think about the message that I'm trying to communicate? Well, Amos, as he speaks here and as he's trying to get the attention of the people of Israel.

He's come up from Judah. He's a stranger in this land. How do I communicate to these people in a way that they will listen to me? I think the order and the arrangement of the nations as he speaks here reflect a powerful use of rhetoric.

One of my professors said that in this passage in chapters one and two, Amos, the prophet, cooks the people's goose without them ever realizing that they're in the pot. And the way he does this is that Amos is going to begin by talking about the judgment of the nations that surrounded Israel. The first six judgment speeches are about the nation-states or the tiny states that surrounded the people of Israel in the region of Syria-Palestine.

The seventh message that is going to be communicated is the message to the southern kingdom of Judah. And I want you to imagine what the people of Israel, as they're hearing this message, what their response and their thoughts would have been. As the prophet was talking about a God roaring from Zion and issuing his thunder from Jerusalem to go out and judge the people around them, they would have agreed wholeheartedly with this message.

As the prophet was talking about the judgments of the Syrians, of the Philistines, of the people of Tyre, of the Edomites, the Ammonites, and the Moabites, they would have applauded his message because Israel in many ways had had a long history of hostilities with many of these people. There had been constant conflict between Israel and Syria, and they had battled back and forth over land and territory. Edom, the descendants of Esau, had been rivals of the people of Israel from before the time that they had entered the promised land.

And so, I can imagine as Amos is talking about the judgment of the surrounding nations, he would have gotten tremendous approval. There might have even been applause for these messages. The offering plate was full on those particular Sundays.

And then, again, continuing the very strategic use of rhetoric, the seventh message, which might appear to us to be the culminating message, there are cycles of seven throughout the book of Amos. Amos 5.21-24, seven things that the people of Israel do. In other places, these lists of seven different things.

The seventh message appears to be the culminating, concluding message. And that message happens to be about the southern kingdom of Judah. Judah, Amos is speaking against his own people.

We really like this guy. Maybe we should keep him. Maybe he would like to transfer and become an Israelite permanently.

So, they would have applauded this message. It looks as if this series of judgment speeches is over, but the problem is there is an eighth message. And that eighth message is going to deal with the people of Israel.

And all of a sudden, this prophet, who has been applauded for speaking about this roaring and thundering God who judges other people, now is going to talk about the sins of Israel. And in a sense, the bomb drops on these people. The punchline of the sermon is made.

And we're going to find they're not terribly accepting when the judgment turns to them and when they become the target. I think for church people, when we speak of the sins of the culture around us, we often get a lot of applause. But when we turn to

the sins of the church, whether it's our materialism, our greed, the way that we've treated our marriages, those kinds... When we begin to speak of the sins within the church, a lack of giving, a lack of evangelism, and a lack of passion for world missions, our messages are often much less well-received.

If we talk about the defection and the apostasy of other denominations, people will applaud our messages. But when we begin to talk about the struggles and the issues and the broken relationships in our own congregation, often people become less willing to hear about a holy God and about his judgment and his disapproval. I think of what it was like for the church, the seven churches in the book of Revelation, as they received a personal individual letter from Jesus and how they responded to that.

Amos is going to make that message just as personal for the people of Israel as he speaks against them. So, the culminating thing in all of this is that, yes, God is the God who judges the nations. All nations are accountable to him.

But Judah and Israel do not get an exemption. They do not get out of jail free card simply because they are God's chosen people. Now, again, let's look at the order and the progression of this.

In chapter 1 verse 3, what the prophet is going to do is not just build this up by talking about the judgments of other peoples. He is also going to effectively surround the people of Israel. Eventually, all of the people around them have been targeted for judgment, and all that's left is Judah and Israel.

Chapter 1, verse 3, for three transgressions of Damascus. Damascus is the capital of Syria, the Arameans. That's to the northeast of Israel.

Chapter 1, verse 6, thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Gaza. Gaza, they're the Philistines. That's to the southwest.

So, we go from northeast to southwest. Chapter 1, verse 9, for three transgressions of Tyre. Tyre is this powerful commercial city to the north in the land of the Phoenicians and the Canaanites.

So he moves back to the north after being in Gaza. Chapter 1, verse 11, for three transgressions of Edom to the southeast, the Edomites. Chapter 1, verse 13, for three transgressions of the Ammonites, east but further north of the Edomites.

In chapter 2, verse 1, for three transgressions of Moab. As he goes through this, he's basically encircling the people of Israel, and then finally there's Judah, and then there's Israel. All right, now for the sins of the people and what's the basis of the judgment? We understand why and how God is going to judge Judah and Israel.

They have violated the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant. They have not kept the Ten Commandments. They have not kept the 613 prescriptions that the Lord has given them.

They have not loved the Lord their God with all their heart, mind, and strength. They have not loved their neighbor as themselves. But on what basis does God judge these other nations? He has not given them the Mosaic Law.

He does not judge them on the basis of the Mosaic Law because God didn't reveal that to these people. But what we understand here is that the word that describes the sin of all of these nations, from Damascus at the beginning until Israel at the very end of this cycle, is that the word that is used here is the word transgression, the Hebrew word pasha. The basic idea of that word is that it refers to a rebellion.

This reflects the idea that God's judgment of the nations is covenantal in the same way that God's judgment of Israel and Judah is covenantal. They have violated their covenant with God in the same way that Israel and Judah, as God's specially chosen people, had violated the Mosaic Covenant. We see the flavor of this word pasha and its idea of transgression, rebellion, and violation of the covenant, sometimes in the human realm in the Old Testament.

In 2 Kings 3, verse 5, it is going to say that the king of Moab rebelled, pasha, against the king of Israel. He was a vassal up until this point. The king of Moab rebels against that, wants to assert his independence from Israel, and so he rebels against that.

As we see the word pasha here, one of the key sin terms in the Old Testament, the idea is not just sin in general, but I think there is a specific way in which these nations have violated the covenant with God. So, the question that we've got to ask is, what is this covenant? What are we talking about? That partly becomes clear when we begin to look at the types of crimes that these nations are specifically indicted for. I think this is going to work its way through a number of judgment speeches against foreign nations.

This is a common feature of prophetic literature. It does not mean that the prophets went on road trips and preached messages to these foreign nations. In fact, the only prophet that we know specifically went to another nation to preach against it and to preach to it is Jonah.

That was an odd thing. That was an unusual thing, and that's part of the reason why I think Jonah resisted it. But preaching prophetic messages, talking about God's judgment of the nations is a common feature of prophetic literature.

In the major prophets, Isaiah 13 to 23, we have a series of oracles against the nations. In Jeremiah, in the Masoretic text, Jeremiah 46 to 51, oracles against the nations. The middle of the book of Ezekiel, chapters 25 to 32, deals with the judgment of the nations.

In the minor prophets, in the Book of the Twelve, we have these two chapters at the end. We also have two books in the Book of the Twelve, the book of Nahum and the book of Obadiah. Those messages, those books, deal exclusively with God's judgment of a foreign people.

Nahum talks about the judgment of the Ninevites and the Assyrians, and Obadiah is going to talk about the judgment of the Edomites. In the book of Habakkuk, chapter 2, we have a series of woe oracles against Babylon. In the book of Zephaniah, chapter 2, we have a series of judgment speeches against some of the people that are also found here in the book of Amos.

This is a common part of prophetic preaching, but the messages were not aimed at the nations as much as they were targeting the people of Israel. It was there to remind them of certain specific things, not to make covenants with these people, not to believe that the gods of these people were superior to the Lord of Israel, to Yahweh, to encourage them in the midst of their oppression and their affliction and their exile and their military defeat that God was ultimately going to deal with Israel's enemies and fulfill His covenant promises. But what are the specific crimes that these nations commit? In Amos, Amos is going to focus on these nations are targeted by God for their covenant violation because of the atrocities that they have committed toward other nations, the violence that they are guilty of, and often the fact that they have not been honest in their dealing with other nations, and they have not kept their treaty obligations or the covenant promises or responsibilities that they had committed themselves to live by.

God, again, we are reminded, presides over everything that is going on in the world, and he holds the nations of the earth accountable for the violence and the atrocities that they commit against each other. When we think about the 20th century and we think about the fact that 20 to 30 million people may have been killed in the war, and we think about the horrors of the two world wars and the Holocaust and the communist purges in the Soviet Union, this message is still relevant for us today. God judges nations when they practice violence, when they practice atrocity when they commit war crimes, and when they are guilty of inhumanity either toward their own people or to other nations, and God sees this and holds them accountable.

In chapter 1, verse 3, here's the judgment of the Arameans, the Syrians, the city of Damascus. For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not revoke their punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron. In every one of these speeches, when it talks about God's judgment and its coming on

these nations, we're going to have this introductory formula for three sins, even for four.

We add those numbers up, three and four, in those two poetic lines, and it seems to be conveying the idea, again, of a full and complete list. When we look at the way that this device is used in Proverbs, however, we will often have statements like, there are six things that the Lord hates, yea seven, and then the last number is normally the number of the list that follows Proverbs 6:16. There are three things too wonderful for me, four things beyond my understanding. We expect a list of four things to follow.

However, what happens here, for three sins, or for three transgressions, even for four, I will not revoke the punishment. Instead of having seven transgressions, or instead of having a list of four, normally, what we have in these lists is that there's simply one sin that's mentioned. For some of the nations that are on this list, there are two sins that are listed.

I think it's kind of focusing on a prime example of their total and complete wickedness. The sin of Damascus is that they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron. Gilead was an Israelite city on the east side of the Jordan.

It was a territory that the Syrians and the Israelites had fought over. At some point in the midst of that conflict, the leaders and the armies of Damascus had committed atrocities against the inhabitants of Gilead. When it says that they threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron, a threshing sledge was an iron board that had sharp stakes driven into it, like sharp knives or nails.

That sharp implement was dragged over wheat or over grain or barley or whatever was being harvested as a way of separating the grain from the stock. Apparently, what's happened here, they have used these threshing sledges not to harvest grain, but to actually torture people. We don't know if this is literal or figurative, but this is describing the horrors of warfare that had happened in the conflict between Damascus and Israel.

God has seen that, and God is holding Damascus accountable. They have violated the covenant with God because of this. We go to chapter 1, verse 6, for three transgressions of Gaza and for four, the Philistines; what have they done? It says at the end of verse 6, because they have carried into exile a whole people to deliver them up to Edom.

It doesn't mention the people. On the basis of 2 Chronicles chapter 26, during the time of Uzziah, there's the conflict that's going on between Judah and Philistia. This may be a reflection of that conflict where the Philistines have taken Israelites or

Judahites and captured them in battle and then taken them into exile and sold them into slavery to the Edomites.

God sees that, and God says, so I will send fire upon the walls of Gaza. It will devour her strongholds. I will cut off the inhabitants from Ashdod and him who holds the scepter from Ashkelon.

I will turn my hand against Ekron, mentioning all of these Philistine cities, and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, says the Lord God. What's interesting here is the Lord does not just hold the king and the leaders and the generals and the commanders responsible for this. God holds the nation itself, including the people, responsible for the atrocities that they have committed.

In verse 5, talking about the judgment of Damascus, the people of Syria shall go into exile to Kir, the place where they had originally come from, says the Lord. We go to verse 9, the third judgment speech, for three transgressions of Tyre and for four I will not revoke the punishment because they delivered up a whole people to Edom. They gave prisoners to the Edomites, and again, probably talking about a conflict with Israel or with Judah, and they did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.

We have a number of examples going back to the time of Solomon. We can look at 1 Kings 5, verse 12, 1 Kings 16, where Tyre has made a series of covenants with the people of Israel. Ahab married Jezebel because her father was a king there.

There were alliances, there were covenants, there were treaties. Even though God was displeased with the fact that Israel had entered into these alliances, God holds Tyre accountable for the fact that they did not live up to their covenant obligations. As nations make treaties and commitments today, God is overlooking that.

God expects that when a nation makes a promise not to engage in warfare, not to harm other people or other nations, and not to encroach on their sovereign territories, God will judge them when they do not live by the promises that they've made. Chapter 1, verse 11, for three transgressions of Edom and for four, I will not revoke the punishment because he pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity, and his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever. So here, we have more than one listed sin.

I think the perpetual conflict between Edom and Israel that again has gone on since before the time that Israel even came into the land is reflected here. Edom treated Israel with wrath and violence. They neglected to focus on the fact that they were brothers with the Israelites.

The Israelites, the descendants of Jacob. The Edomites, the descendants of Esau. And because they had renounced pity, they had been angry, they had kept their wrath, God is going to pour out his wrath on the Edomites.

And so, again, we have this kind of stereotypical language about judgment. I will send a fire upon Teman, and it shall devour the strongholds of Bozrah. So God sees what the Edomites have done, and he's going to hold them accountable.

The Ammonites, mentioned in chapter 1 verse 13, three transgressions of the Ammonites, even for four I will not revoke the punishment. Listen to what they have done. And this is a horrible description but I think it's the realities of warfare in the ancient Near East.

Because they have ripped open the pregnant women in Gilead, and remember that's the city that was abused and tortured by Damascus in the opening series of these judgment speeches. They ripped open the pregnant women in Gilead.

They killed these non-combatants. Innocent women were slaughtered. Their young children that were in their wombs were destroyed as a result of this.

And here's the reason they did it. That they might enlarge their border. They committed one of the most inhumane crimes that could possibly be imagined simply so that they might enlarge their territory and enhance their prosperity.

So, God says, I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabah, the Ammonite city, and it will devour her strongholds with shouting on the day of battle, with a tempest on the day of the whirlwind. And their king shall go into exile, he and his princes together. So we saw earlier the people will go into exile.

God holds the leaders especially accountable. And it's comforting as I read this to know that in the world that we live in, where there are these terrible atrocities, international terrorism, and the things that are going on today, God sees those things, and God ultimately is the judge of all the earth who will make things right. Abraham says, shall not the judge of the earth do what is right? As he's thinking about a situation that was going on in his day.

And I think Amos gives the encouragement to know that as God deals with the nations, both in history and eschatologically, God is going to make things right. God judges nations both within history, and there is also a final judgment at the end of time where God is going to hold all nations, all peoples, all kings, all leaders, all of those who have been in authority, all of those who are responsible for that, God holds them accountable for those kinds of things. Chapter 2, verse 1, before we get to Judah and Israel, for three transgressions of Moab and for four, I will not revoke the punishment because he burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom.

And here we have a conflict and you can imagine these small nations always battling over territory, borders, right to this piece of land or this piece of property or this waterway and those kinds of things. For three transgressions of Moab, he burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom. What is significant here is that we have the first clear example of where this is not simply something that one of these nations has done to the people of Israel.

This is now an example of where two people where Israel is not involved at all, Moab and Edom, and the violence and the way that they have degraded and even dishonored the remains of the king of their enemy ultimately holds them accountable for punishment. So, we've talked about the fact that these nations have committed some type of covenant violation against the Lord. When we're thinking about the Israelites, we could say, well, this is simply the working out of the Abrahamic covenant.

God said I will bless those who bless you. I will curse those who curse you. And so these nations are held accountable for that.

That may come into play here. Ultimately, I think the covenant that is in view and why these nations who are not under the Mosaic covenant can be viewed as committing Peshah against Yahweh is because they have violated the terms of the Noahic covenant that was established with all of humanity right after the time of the flood. Remember, in that covenant and the way covenants are set up in the Old Testament, covenants always contain promises from God, but they also contain some type of condition or stipulation.

The promise of the Noahic covenant is that God will never again judge the earth by a flood. He's not going to destroy the earth in the way that he did in the days of Noah. And that's important.

The earth has to continue for God to carry out his plan of salvation. However, the obligation was, is that humanity from this point forward, as a way of making sure that the judgment of a flood did not happen again, they were to restrain the violence that had caused that flood in the first place. Human government is established here.

And God says to Noah, whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. And that's, that's an everlasting commitment that humanity is responsible for restraining violence and bloodshed. The reason for that is that human beings are created in the image of God.

And so man is to respect that by these crimes that they have committed, by the way, that the people of Damascus threshed the inhabitants of Gilead with an iron sledge, the way that another group of people sold, and several of these people sold Israelites

or other people into slavery, into exile, the way that they had violated the international treaties and covenants that they had made to practice peace, the way that the Ammonites had whipped open the pregnant women of Gilead, the way that the Moabites had burned to lime the bones of the king, they had violated what God set in place in Genesis 9, verses 5 and 6. As a result of that, the judgment of God was going to fall on the nations that surrounded Israel. Okay. And so, what we have here is far more than just a history lesson.

And we've talked about the relevance of this for people today. This is not just a covenant that applied to the nations in the 8th century that surrounded Israel and Judah in the land of Syria, Palestine. This is a covenant.

This is an obligation that is placed on all of humanity. And so, God continues to judge nations throughout history on the basis of this covenant. And I think, looking at recent history, I believe that God judged Nazi Germany for the atrocities that they committed.

I believe that God judged the Soviet empire because it was a violent, wicked empire. But thinking about our own country, when we have a country that practices abortion and that murders a million children every year, ultimately, there is a reckoning for that type of violence. And ultimately, God holds all nations accountable.

And so, God judges nations in history today in the same way that he did in the days of Israel and Judah in the Old Testament. This is not just the Old Testament. This is God's abiding commitment to humanity.

And in fact, the book of Isaiah as it talks about the final judgment of God in a section of the book of Isaiah called the Little Apocalypse, which talks about ultimately, God's judgment is going to fall on the entire earth. And I mean, this is going to be a devastating judgment. It's not just going to fall on Damascus or Edom or Moab or one particular nation.

It's going to fall on the whole earth, and the earth is going to reel and totter like a drunk man under this judgment. Why is God going to bring this judgment? Isaiah 24, verses 1 to 5, explains this for us. And it says this, verse 5: the earth lies defiled under its inhabitants for they have transgressed the laws.

They have violated the statutes. They have broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt.

Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left. Here's a judgment that's going to fall on the earth. Why does it happen? And Isaiah says the reason this judgment will fall on the earth is that they have violated the everlasting covenant.

When we're talking about the everlasting covenant, what are we talking about? Again, we're not talking about the Mosaic law because that is a covenant that is established specifically with the people of Israel. When it says they have transgressed the laws, we're not talking about the Ten Commandments. We are talking about, I believe, the provisions of the Noahic covenant that have been violated throughout history.

Ultimately, the blood meter is going to reach its full measure and God is going to say, enough. God said to the people of Israel that they were to make sure that they prosecuted and practiced justice in cases of murder and killing because the blood of the innocent victims as they were living in the land would cry out to God for justice. Imagine that multiplied millions and millions of times over as the blood of all of the innocent, the violence that humans have inflicted on each other.

Imagine the responsibility, the guilt, again, in our country, not just the murders and the things that happen there, a million abortions a year. There is, ultimately, for all forms of violence and bloodshed, an accounting to God. How do we know in Isaiah that that's particularly and that's specifically what Isaiah is focusing on? Well, he talks about this as an everlasting covenant.

That, again, would go back to the time of Noah. But in Isaiah 26-21, I think we get a more specific idea of what specific covenant we're talking about here. Isaiah 26-21 says this: For behold, the Lord is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.

And the earth will disclose the blood that is shed on it and will no more cover its slain. God knows all of the bloodshed, all of the violence, all of the atrocities that have been committed throughout history. The earth is going to disclose that and God is ultimately going to bring his judgment because of that.

In the book of the 12, I think Amos is reflecting Noahic covenant theology, that God is going to judge these nations because of the horrible things that they have done and the bloodshed and the atrocities that they have committed. But we see the same thing in the book of Habakkuk. There is going to be a judgment that falls on Babylon, and God is ultimately, after he uses them to carry out his judgment on Israel and on Judah, God is going to judge the Babylonians.

Why? Because they were an empire that was built on military domination, violence, aggression, and bloodshed. And Habakkuk says this: Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity. Behold, it is not from the Lord of hosts that people labor merely for fire and nations weary themselves for nothing.

Babylon is an empire that is built on blood. Ultimately, there will be an accounting to God, and that empire will be brought down. Nahum, talking about the judgment of the Assyrians, and we talked in one of our videos dealing with the historical background of how Assyria was known as a particularly violent and aggressive people with impaled victims on sticks and dismembered bodies and beheaded soldiers and torture and all of those kinds of things.

When the judgment of God falls on Nineveh in history, here's what it says, chapter 3, verse 1: Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder and no end to its prey. So, they have committed bloodshed, they have committed atrocities, and what Nahum portrays is an enemy army that is going to do exactly the same to them, and the punishment will fit the crime because God holds them accountable. So that's the basis of God's judgment of the nations in chapters 1 and 2. When we turn to what Amos is going to say about the judgment of Judah and Israel, we see that the basis of the judgment, there's a different perspective here.

All of the people in Amos' audience would have said, we absolutely, we wholeheartedly agree with you with what you say here. These nations deserve the judgment of God. They would have applauded God, roaring like a lion and thundering like a storm.

But remember the seventh speech, and again, the people in the northern kingdom would have approved of this, for three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke their punishment because they have rejected the law of the Lord and they have not kept his statutes. So now, the judgment of Judah is based on the fact that they have violated God's commandments to them, and I think the basis of that judgment is their violation of the Mosaic law. They have not kept his statutes; their lies have led them astray, those after which their fathers have walked, so I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem.

Okay, this is great. The seventh message, the message is over, but the eighth message that the people would not have liked so much is that God says, now listen to this: for three transgressions of Israel and for four, I will not revoke the punishment. The interesting thing that happens as the Lord turns to the judgment of Israel is that instead of giving us a list of one sin, or instead of giving us maybe two sins that they have done, there is a long list cataloging the sins of Israel.

They sell the righteous for silver, the needy for a pair of sandals, they trample on the head of the poor, they turn aside the way of the afflicted, a man and his father go to the same girl, they lay down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God, they drink the wine of those who have been fined. The longest list of sins is found in Israel. Israel would have thought, as the people of God, we are exempt from this judgment; we're better than those pagans who worship those other gods.

God says to Israel, through Amos, you are more accountable to those to whom much is given; much is required. God has given you his law; you have not kept it, and you will ultimately be held accountable. We are reminded in Amos 1-2 that God is a roaring lion; God is a thundering storm.

We're going to see that throughout the book of Amos. That judgment will fall on the nations for their violation of the Noahic covenant. God's judgment will fall on Judah and Israel for how they have violated the Mosaic covenant.

They have failed to love God with all their hearts. They have failed to love their neighbors as themselves.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his lecture series on the Minor Prophets. This is session 8, The Judgment on the Nations.