

Kings and Prophets 15-03-13b

We resume our study now. We're looking in the book of Amos at the reasons for God's judgment. This is good information if God is going to judge me I Would love to know what it is That constitutes the charge and the conviction so that I can fix it and remove myself from the place of judgment get back into the place of blessing and and positive life fruitfulness Be a branch that he's just pruning not one that he's snapping out and putting in a bundle to be burned And there is a difference and we will know the difference if we want to know anybody That's not sure if they're under judgment or discipline is probably under judgment because their relationship is not healthy enough to realize that it's just a Midcourse correction Well, I mentioned that the nature of this indictment in Verse in chapters 3 and 4 of Amos has to do with insensitivity to the poor now Think about this pay attention God is unhappy with people in both kingdoms northern kingdom, especially for insensitivity to the poor So what is the remedy? Ah Let's create a program to help the poor.

I'm gonna find Lazarus at the gate and give him a sandwich. I'm going to I'll fix this not the answer insensitivity to the poor is a symptom of Spiritual malaise I do not love my neighbor because I do not love my god My horizontal is in trouble because my vertical has fallen over So this is a useful Indicator light this is a useful Warning buzzer you get in your car and you hear that little happy ding ding ding meaning you didn't fasten your seat belt I have a problem right now where my seat belt I need to spray some WD or something in there because I Fasten it and I'm driving along and all of a sudden it goes poonk and just goes across and I think if there had been A wreck I would be crawling back to my car from 45 miles an hour Feet in front of it because my my seat belt did not hold but anytime it goes poonk Well, then right away. I start hearing this ding ding ding and the little light comes on your seat belt is not fastened You law-breaking ingrate, you know get get that thing fixed.

Well If you are interested at all in whether or not Spiritual life is what it should be Do a gut check on how sensitive you feel toward the needs and the situation of fellow believers God says you should know that you're in trouble with me because look at the way you're treating the poor Now, how do I know this aside from what it says throughout chapter 4 of Amos turn back to Deuteronomy chapter 14? there is a Wonderful section here on tithing and I am now going to preach tithing. You've never heard it before You're gonna hear it now Tithing tithing tithing we're big on the tithe. Here's the tithe Deuteronomy chapter 14 beginning at verse 22 You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year-by-year The increase of your grain you had some grain Maybe you sowed a bushel and you reaped ten bushels.

What's the increase? Nine bushels. It's the increase. It's how much more you had than what you started with, right? It's the overflow It's the excess.

It's the it's the it's the profit it's the net and Look verse 23 and you shall bring the tithe to the priest who shall sock it away and decide what he's gonna do with it Is that how it works? You shall eat before the Lord your God in the place where he chooses to make his name abide The

tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil You take it and bring it before the Lord and say Lord this came from you here is a representative portion and We are going to have a celebratory meal a meal this is Thanksgiving in Old Testament Israel, it's Thanksgiving Day That's exactly what it is Look Lord, we have in our hands the tangible benefits that you have bestowed on us in your grace You have brought the former rains. We have had increase in our fields our flocks have Multiplied our herds have been fruitful. Here is the increase.

Oh Lord We bring it before you and we enjoy it in your presence. It is as though hear me now, we are sitting down at the table with the Lord and Celebrating a banquet at which he and we are present. What did Jesus say in 320 of Revelation? if any man open the door what happens I will come in to him and Sup with him and he with me This isn't pie in the sky by and by Jesus doesn't say Behold in the kingdom.

I will stand at the door and knock And the kingdom is going to be the other way around It's all of the ne'er-do-wells in this life that are gonna be standing at the door and knocking and not being admitted This happens now That's a letter to the churches. The Lord Jesus Christ stands at your door and my door as it were Knocking and if we do the Deuteronomy 14 thing, we recognize our blessings we celebrate and bring before God Our praises and our offerings and eat our tithe of Thanksgiving in his presence That's communion. That's intimacy.

That's fellowship. You don't have to ask where your spiritual life stands when you have that level of communion with the Lord Jesus Christ You don't have to ask if things go sour, you know It's tough times and he is with us going through the valley of the shadow You shall eat before the Lord your God in the place where he chooses to make his name abide Now in Old Testament Israel, where was the seat of the presence of God? Mount Zion the field of Arana David makes the provision Solomon builds the temple the Shekinah fills it you come to Jerusalem you eat Within sight of the temple you eat looking at the mountain of God where his holy presence dwells Where is that in New Testament days? It's your local church, right No It's not your local church. It is the kingdom in your soul.

It is the banquet room of your heart Each of us has the place where God has chosen to make his name abide Where does his name abide? It's within us So that is where we tithe our grain and our new wine and our oil the firstborn of our herds and flocks to learn to fear the Lord your God always to respect to understand the in The genuine sense of the word awesome God who has saved us who has related us to himself through his son the Lord Jesus But if the journey is too long for you so that you're not able to carry Your animals and your grain and all of these things all the way to Jerusalem Very interestingly you shall verse 25 Exchange it for money Take the money in your hand and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses You shall spend the money for whatever your heart desires. Whatever your heart desires You don't hand it to the priest and let the priest buy something and hand it back to you your heart Oxen sheep wine similar drink That's beer barley beer like they used to make in the Old Testament days For whatever your heart desires you shall eat there before the Lord your God and you shall rejoice You and your household you shall celebrate you will revel you will appreciate It's Thanksgiving

You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates for he has no part nor inheritance with you Doesn't own land doesn't have flocks and herds can't bring in a harvest doesn't have a tenth To do these things with at the end of every third year You shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates city gates you've got fields you've got flocks and herds you're doing stuff out, but everybody has a County seat everyone has a town. This is where you would resort if you were under attack This is where the the local government resides This is where justice is dispensed.

The county courthouse is here in the gate, right? So you take it in there. This is Provision for the poor you bring it in For charity it does two things it provides for the Levite because he has no portion or inheritance with you in verse 29 and The stranger the fatherless the widow who are within your gates Widow fatherless orphans within your gates This means there is an organized system of charity They're not there's not a hobo cross outside your door and they all stop by they don't stand at the corner of you know Lakish Lane and You know the valley of a Wayne Avenue Waiting for you to stick a 20 shekel bill in their hand because they have a cardboard sign. It's organized.

It is systematized They are in the gates. These things are taken in the gates. Remember the gates are the place of adjudication There is a system there is qualification for this charity.

Maybe these widows are Registered they are known their situation is understood There is Administration there is just and fair Distribution you put it in the hands of people who can care for the fatherless the widow the orphan and these others that the stranger in the gates Within the gates. It's organized. It's systematized.

It is done fairly and with justice It's not a system to be taken advantage of by ne'er-do-wells layabouts the shiftless the lazy the ingrates So This is done in order that look at the end of verse 29 So that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand, which you do you are sensitive to the source of your prosperity and you are sensitive to those who aren't able to partake of that kind of prosperity and you systematically Ensure their provision it's a beautiful system done from the heart By those who love the Lord their God and love their neighbor as themselves This is the system that there are many other places This is a nice summary here the last half of chapter 14 of Deuteronomy. So now when you turn back to Amos What is actually happening? Here are the word of the Lord you cows of Bashan in chapter 4 on the mountain of Samaria Who oppressed the poor crushed the needy who say to your husbands? Haul it in let's eat and drink The Lord God has sworn by his holiness The days shall come upon you when he's going to take you away with thongs and thorns. You're going to have these Slave hooks put through your face They took those long thorns these acanthus bush thorns these giant We were walking the dogs the other day and and ever so often along the creek If you look there are thorns that are like three inches long that some I don't know what the name of that bush is but these are big long thorns and there's a similar plant that grows in the Middle East and They would take these and break them off with a stem and the thorn and it's like a hook and they would then Jab this thing through your cheek and Tie a thong to it and You're not going to

resist that.

It's just like a ring in the nose of an ox He's a big animal, but the pain in his nose is so severe. He'll do whatever you want when you pull on that thing So you're going to be led through a narrow gap Single file and you see this Elizabeth was telling me she found those by relief Images that I mentioned last week you can find them on the just just look for Asher Bannipal look for Nineveh Look for slave captive Torture of slaves you can see it all the particular One that I have is Titled I think you can find it this is a thing that came from biblical archaeology review from 1991 January February 1991. I actually have I've got the physical magazine for that But it's called grisly Assyrian record of torture and death.

I say again grisly Assyrian record of torture and death and it is nothing but a series of images taken from these Stila and and inscriptionary walls and so on It's worth looking at because God says to his people in Israel I am sending the Assyrian against you and They're they're known for this. This is their Reputation is why they were so feared You will be cast into Harmon says the Lord we talked about that So come to Bethel and transgress at Gilgal multiply your this can be transgression or rebellion Bring your sacrifices every morning your tithes see it says every three days And you've got a text note there that says or three years For verse four there That's what it's talking about what we saw in Deuteronomy 14 You're gonna go through these motions Offer a sacrifice of Thanksgiving with 11 proclaim and announce the freewill offerings for this you love you children of Israel Says the Lord God, this is This is thick sarcasm This is God saying. Yeah, right You're you're bringing your your every three-year tithe you're sensitive to the needs of the poor look at you you fat cows Watch yourselves being led in a procession by the Assyrians and think back on how well you kept these commands with what genuineness of heart with what respect for the Lord God on whom that horizontal sensitivity rests There's a gut-check Have you thought about brethren in the periphery have you thought about that or are we only thinking of ourselves? Well, I'm dissatisfied I'm unhappy have we looked around is there someone in our periphery that we need to be thinking about in terms of looking out for their interest it is a Warning to us if we haven't even given that a thought if we've only been thinking about our little and it's easy to do We're we're this is a society and a culture that that esteems self-centeredness God has a different plan He says in verse 6 I gave you cleanness of teeth in your cities and lack of bread in your places You've not returned to me says the Lord.

I withheld rain from you. Remember the days of Elijah. I I've I've shut up the heavens When there were still three months to the harvest, this is the Heart of the growing season no rain, by the way just here in North Texas you know, we've been in drought conditions and we haven't had this bad of this bad of drought in over 30 years and The last time we had a drought of this magnitude.

We only had half the population that we have now They're like 2.8 million and back in 1980 when we had a similar drought well, we've got almost 6 million in the in the in this area calling County Dallas County and We've got twice as many people drawing on the same reservoirs as before and But all of this rain that we've had is filling up the reservoirs and if we have good

months The prime months for rainfall are May and June think about it. May June July August September. When's the harvest time? You remember the the old song Sun refused to shine shine on harvest moon up in the sky January February June and July and then you know snow time ain't no time to spoon.

So shine on harvest moon well because August September that's the harvest. Well, May June. Those are the rains and God says I'm gonna shut up the rains I have shut up the rains three months ahead of the harvest and you paid no attention Like boy, this is a really bad year.

We're having a drought not looking to the source of these things. God has promised Prosperity for your crops your flocks and herds if you're obedient and a dearth I will turn, you know, the Sky to brass and your ground to iron If you're not obedient yet, you don't put two and two together My sky is brass and my ground is iron. We're just really having a bad year.

I don't understand Insensitivity God says I've sent rain to one place and withheld it in another Two or three cities wandered Wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied yet. You have not returned to me says the Lord I blasted you with blight and mildew when your gardens increased your vineyards fig trees and your olive trees the locusts devoured them Yet you have not returned to me says the Lord how many of these yet you have not returned to me is now have we? seen verse 6 Verse 8 verse 9 Verse 10. I sent among you a plague after the manor of Egypt your young men I killed with a sword captive horses stench of your camps came up into your nostrils yet You have not returned to me verse 10 says the Lord overthrew some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and you were like firebrand plucked from the burning you have not returned to me says the Lord Not just three transgressions.

Not just four transgressions five transgressions You have not returned to me Therefore thus I will do to you. Oh Israel because I will do this to you prepare to meet your God. Oh Israel Is there any more? sobering set of words Prepare to meet your God well Hopefully we are prepared to meet our God hopefully we're gonna rejoice when the Lord Jesus comes with a shout and the voice of the Archangel and the Trump of God and We will be anxious to be at his side and with him not Confused scared and and notice that our upward trajectory isn't toward the bright light and presence of the Lord Jesus, but Angled toward the darkness which is outside in the the back ranks of the guys that have the brooms and the little flat pans to sweep Up what's left behind of the white horses that the Lord Jesus and his armies are going to be riding and you're in the back You know on circus sweep up duty Prepare to meet your God.

Oh Israel verse 13 for behold the creator God testified to By the heavens and the earth He who forms mountains and creates the wind who declares to men to man What his thought is and makes the morning darkness who treads the high places of the earth The Lord God of hosts is his name The Lord God of hosts is his name. Do you remember the the very end of Deuteronomy chapter 14? Do you remember what it was that the people were to celebrate when they brought their tithe when they were to reflect their sensitivity to the poor Remember

the last part of that chapter What did he say? Take it to the place where God has chosen to put his name It is the Lord your God who has blessed you fear the Lord your God always That you may learn to fear the Lord your God always There's the emphasis on his name You shall eat before the Lord your God in the place where he chooses to make his name abide Here in Amos they have to be reminded of what the name of the Lord is not only do they not honor his name They can't even remember what it is They're ready to call him bail They're ready to unite him with Ashtar and Chemosh and all of these other gods of the people of the land Then it continues in chapter 5 Hear this word which I take up against you it is a lamentation. Oh house of Israel.

This is a dirge Look at verse 2 the Virgin of Israel has fallen. What do we think of when we think of virginity? The Virgin of Israel has fallen. Is this the pure unsullied unstained innocent? Daughter of Israel that has fallen.

Why is Israel called a virgin here? Virgin of Israel has fallen. She will rise no more. She lies forsaken on her land.

There is no one to raise her up That last phrase is the key there was no one to raise her up why She is forsaken. She is abandoned. She has no children.

She has no husband she is Really the old maid Israel. This is the unmarried woman Israel that has fallen on the land. There's nobody this this is a sign of Unfruitfulness remember when Hannah was pleading before the Lord because she had no child Well, this is the idea.

This this is a fruitless woman and there is no one to raise her up God who is supposed to be your husband has abandoned her Cast her off thus says the Lord God the city that goes out by a thousand shall have a hundred left. That's a 90% Casualty rate and that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel 90% casualty rate only a remnant will be saved For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel. Is this not a tolling bell this lamentation? Hear the word Oh house of Israel thus says the Lord God for thus says the Lord to the house of Israel Seek me and live There is still time you're hearing this warning, which means it's not too late I've managed to get your attention long enough.

You've you've listened all the way to chapter 5 here Seek me and live. This is still reversible. This can still be taken away as we're going to see Seek me and live do not seek Bethel nor enter Gilgal nor pass over to Beersheba For Gilgal shall surely go into tact captivity Bethel shall come to nothing seek the Lord and live Lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph.

What's the house of Joseph? Ephraim and devour it and why is it called the house of Joseph? Look at the distance from which you have fallen look at Joseph his elevation despite adversity his role as the Savior his his Role as deliverer. They were blessed in a foreign land. They were unable to return to their own land But the house of Joseph God is about to break out like fire and all of those haystacks that were all those sheaves that were Bowing they're about to be flaming sheaves There will be no one to quench the fire in Bethel you who turn justice to

wormwood and lay righteousness to rest in the earth Justice is perverted You look around at the judgments that are being made in the popular world today about current events Who shot whom for what reason who is to blame? We have violent religions being defended and extolled and separated from the natural outgrowth of their teachings and yet Christianity which has never taught any such thing is bad mouth and driven out of the public square and shushed and banished and Expunged and expelled God made the Pleiades and Orion He turns the shadow of death in the morning and makes the day dark as night He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth.

The Lord is his name He rains ruin upon the strong so that fury comes upon the fortress By the way, that word for fortress is used in Amos 11 times It's only used 33 times in the whole Bible in the whole Old Testament and one-third of them are in this book why because these people in this time of prosperity in the days of Jeroboam the second are depending upon their Investments depending upon their material wealth depending upon their insurance policies depending upon their strength But God will rain ruin on the strong. Do you remember the flood? Did anybody survive that no matter how strong They hate the one who rebukes in the gate and they abhor the one who speaks uprightly Do we hear that today? Somebody tries to speak up for divine standards of righteousness for morality. Oh You're a hater you're a bigot you are a Can have nothing to do with race But they'll call you a racist anyway, just because it has such a nice ring to it You try to speak for righteousness and you're rebuked and shushed Therefore verse 11 because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him Remember, they were supposed to be bringing grain tithes into the storehouse to provide for the poor instead They're taking the poor man that's got nothing and taxing him Yeah to see what's happened to my insurance as a result of the Affordable Care Act I am not well off by any means and I am going to pay an Enormous amount more if I want any kind of health care or if I don't want to be Penalized by the government for not having health care.

I have no choice in that matter. I have been Violated I have been forced to Shell out great shovelfuls of money that I don't have through no fault of my own and If I don't do it by the end of next month, it's a thousand dollar a day fine on my organization How do you like that? Yeah, the poor are being taxed That's happening now. That's now that's not later.

That's not in the future. It's now You tread down the poor you take grain taxes from him though. You have built houses of hewn stone You shall not dwell in them.

You've planted pleasant visits. You will not vineyards. You will not drink wine from them remember that they were supposed to bring in the tithe of the wine and the olive and all the rest of it and And enjoy it before the Lord and then share it with those who didn't have God says you're not even you're not gonna have it to enjoy not you're not gonna have a tithe You're not gonna have any of it.

I Know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins Afflicting the just and taking bribes diverting the poor from justice at the gate Therefore notice verse 13 here. It's real interesting to

try to figure out exactly what this verse means. It kind of cuts two ways It says the prudent keeps silent At that time for it is an evil time the wise the prudent Keeps silent that that word keeps silent can also mean moan or mourn Give out with a cry of pain because It is an evil time Well, who are the silent here? Who are the ones keeping silent? Are these the ones who know better and don't speak up or are those who know that if they speak up? It's only going to get worse and there's no point in speaking up.

So they remain silent their wisdom tells them This is not the time to speak Well as is so often the case my suggestion to you. The answer is yes It is both it is one of those double-edged Statements of the Word of God There are people who who should have spoken up and didn't and now they're going to mourn and there are those who because they are mourning over the fallen righteousness and the death of justice in the streets are Remaining silent because that is the better part of valor. That is what is prudent at this time It's not wise to speak out.

It's no longer safe to speak out Therefore the prudent keeps silent at that time. It is an evil time Seek good and not evil so that you may live so the Lord God of hosts will be with you as You have spoken hate evil love good establish justice in the gate It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph Remember the house of Joseph earlier. Here's the where fire is breaking out.

Here's the remnant of Joseph Mercy is still available. It is not too late. This is God's final appeal Southern Kingdom is going to respond Northern Kingdom is not we know this historically well We didn't quite finish but When you get to the remainder of this book beginning in chapter 7 the visions There are three visions here beginning in chapter 7. There is a vision of the locusts The Lord God showed me that he formed locust swarms at the beginning of the late crop It was the late crop after the Kings mowings and and so it was when he had finished eating the grass of the land I said Oh Lord God forgive I pray.

Oh that Jacob might stand for he is small and the Lord relented Concerning this it shall not be says the Lord the impending judgment pictured by the locusts The Prophet repents and God says, okay, no locust judgment verse 4 The Lord God showed me the Lord God called for conflict by fire and consumed the great deep and devoured the territory and I said Oh Lord God cease I pray that Jacob might stand for he is small the Lord relented concerning this and the fire that consumes both the land and the deep Is forestalled this also shall not be says the Lord God then you get the third vision He showed me The wall the Lord standing with a plumb line with a plumb line in his hand. The Lord said Amos What do you see? He said I see a plumb line The Lord said behold I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel. I will not pass by them anymore The high places of Isaac shall be desolate and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste I will rise with the sword against the house of Jeroboam two warnings Locusts there's enough repentance judgment is is forestalled the Fire picture there is repentance.

It is forestalled the plumb line. There is no repentance from Amos Amos knows After two warnings and and Remissions by the Lord God there will not be a third And you can look back in

the history that we've covered in Kings and Chronicles and see that God has been warning these people with drought with loss of agricultural prosperity and With the floods of the surrounding nations These are floods of people coming in and devastating everything in the land and they have not heeded the warning. They're insensate They're indifferent.

They have not turned They haven't done What Amos? pictures in terms of repentance and return and This plumb line of God's righteousness has been held against the people. It's kind of like Maynay Maynay. Take a loo Farson you have been weighed in the balance in this case you have been measured with the plumb line and You haven't returned to vertical you haven't restored that Love for God that results in love for your neighbors The high places will be desolate the sanctuaries of Israel will be laid waste I will rise with the sword against the house of Jeroboam so We see the results of not Heeding even this last and greatest set of warnings from the mouth of the Prophet And that's why within a few years at 721 BC The Northern Kingdom is going to go completely out.

There will be a last-minute repentance on the part of Judah pictured with Hezekiah you remember Hezekiah gets 15 more years, but then it just all goes down the drain with him it all goes north as I like to say and He personally is going to picture the kingdom of Judah that will eventually go out as well They get a reprieve, but they don't take advantage of it Well, this is the substance of the book of Amos these warnings It is so beautifully structured God is a God of order you see it in nature You see it in the microscopic you see it in the macroscopic it Testifies it is a witness to the glory of God the order of God the call of God to man for relationship with himself you either heed that call and receive blessing or You brush aside that call and receive judgment. It's really very simple and The remainder of this book is an elaboration of that call to national Destiny, what was Jonah about? Where is your turning you've got the ability to turn even the Ninevites have got an ability to turn and they're more ready to do it than you There was the personal relationship with God Pictured with Hosea and Gomer here. You have this national opportunity this covenant responsibility Defined back in Deuteronomy There are the blessings and then there are the curses there is bringing in the tithe and being sensitive to the poor there is ignoring that and Receiving judgment for it.

It is a reminder of their opportunity under the covenant and Their responsibility under the covenant well, we'll pick up next time and look at the final Prophet in this set of four and the emphasis in his book when we continue our study of kings and prophets next time father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the manifold and Effective ways that you communicate truth to us in this day in this time in this place in your plan Our role as members of the body of Jesus Christ representing him on this earth Granted the presence and power of your Holy Spirit and Unmitigated unbridled access to the truth of your word We pray that as we muse on these things as we reflect on them and think about them That they will be meaningful to us that God the Holy Spirit will impress them on our hearts in a way that results in More fruitfulness more Training and preparation for service now and in the kingdoms which are to come we pray it in Jesus name. Amen