

Come Follow Me
Elo Viz production
Week 47
Amos & Obadiah

The name Amos in Hebrew means burden. A great symbol of his life and the things that he had to go through. Amos was a sheep farmer and a sycamore tree harvester. He didn't have a lot of background in the study of the prophets or in that day they called it the school of the prophets. (Amos 7:14) He was just a farm boy, a straight shooter. He told it how it was and didn't apologize for any of it. His ministry started 2 years before the earthquake. Which earthquake? Well, if you remember King Uzziah, who was a decent man up until the time that he decided to go into the temple and do priestly things that he was not authorized to do. It says that from that day he became a leper and was cursed by God because he crossed that line. It is also believed that on that same day God was so upset that there was a great earthquake as well. So in theory Amos started his ministry around 750 B.C. He was also from the southern kingdom of Judah but was called to preach to the people of Israel in the northern kingdom.

At the very start of his ministry Amos speaking for the Lord denounces the cities around Israel. Starting with Damascus in Chapter 1 verse 3

“3 Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they have **threshed** Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:”

This is very loosely translated as; for 3 transgressions I have looked the other way, I have shown mercy, But for the 4th transgression you will receive my wrath, my judgment.

He does this with all the cities surrounding Israel. In verse 6:

“For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver *them* up to Edom:”

This is interesting because in the book of Obidiah, he is called to preach to the people of Edom. Which are the descendants of Esau. If you remember Jacob and Esau were twin brothers, sons of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham. Esau was the Eldest and sold his birthright to his brother Jacob for a bowl of stew. Then Jacob and his mother deceived Isaac and there was this huge family drama. Well, even though Jacob who later became Israel mended his relationship with Esau their posterity were still at war because of this conflict. And this is who God condemns through the prophet Obidiah.

Back to Amos: verse 9 he denounced the city of Tyrus. Next the city of Edom, then Ammon, Then finally Moab.

It's like this spiral around Israel then it comes straight to the heart, to His chosen people.
Chapter 2 verse 4:

“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they have **despised** the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:

5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.”

Then he ends with the 10 Tribe of Israel which is who Amos was called to preach to: Verse 6

“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they **sold** the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;

7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the *same* maid, to **profane** my holy name:

8 And they lay *themselves* down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned *in* the house of their god.”

It really gives you an idea of how bad things have become in Israel. It makes me think of the Nephites and Lamanites in the Book of Mormon just before their destruction. They were condemning the righteous, taking from the poor, prostitution in the temple, and corruption on every level. They were ripe for destruction.

God goes on in the next few chapters to call them out on every sin they have committed. Acknowledging they “are overwhelmed by an adversary”. And He (God) as a loving father still is trying to reach out to them. He is trying to get their attention.

In chapter 4 He says starting in verse 6: I sent a famine to try and get you to return to me and “yet, have ye not returned unto me”.

I withheld rain from you. “yet have ye not returned unto me,” (Amos 4:8)

I send diseases to your crops and it wiped them all out.

“**10** I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your **young** men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

11 I have overthrown *some* of you, as God **overthrew Sodom** and Gomorrah, and ye were as a **firebrand** plucked out of the **burning**: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: *and* because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

13 For, lo, he that **formeth** the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what *is* his **thought**, that maketh the **morning darkness**, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The Lord, The God of hosts, *is* his name.

There is a famous painting by Greg Olsen of the savior sitting on the hill overlooking the city called "O Jerusalem" referring to the scripture in Matthew 23:37

"37 O **Jerusalem**, Jerusalem, *thou* that **killest** the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often **would** I have **gathered** thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye **would not**!

He has tried so hard to get his children to turn to Him. He has tried to get us to turn to Him. How frustrating this must be for Him when His children don't choose Him but instead wallow in their sin bringing destruction upon their own heads. But in all of this there is hope. A beam of light. Some simple instruction to correct our false ways and make that course correction back to Him who is the source of all joy and peace.

Amos 5:14, among all this wickedness God gives them 1 simple instruction to turn it all around. 1 step towards Him to obtain His mercy:

"14 Seek **good**, and not **evil**, that ye may live:"

Verse 15 "Hate the evil, and **love** the good,"

Sounds so simple. Of course we chose good over evil. But here is the problem: What if your definition of good and evil doesn't match God's definition of good and evil? What if what you think is good and evil is different from what God says is good and evil?

This is what was plaguing Israel. They decided they knew best what was right and what was wrong. They decided they would define what was right and what was wrong. And the truth of it is that we are facing this same situation today. Where we think our opinion is THE correct opinion without even the thought of what God deems to be right and wrong.

Regarding this subject Gary Hamrick says this:

"Every single one of us must answer this question in order to understand what is right and what is wrong; Who or what is the objective moral standard?"

Who or what is the objective moral standard?

Every single one of us must answer that question in order to understand what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil.

Now let me give you a few clues to what is NOT the objective moral standard: first of all Government, Government is not the objective moral standard.

Secondly, another clue, culture: in terms of what the most popular opinion is, and the majority of belief is, that does not define what the objective moral standard is.

And last clue: you, I... are not the objective moral standard.

The answer to the question at least insofar as if you really believe God and believe the Bible, If you are a follower of Christ, the only clear answer to that question “who or what is the only objective moral standard, is God.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ1dA_s7aic

This is the problem that Israel was facing, they had made themselves the judge of Good and evil, right and wrong. And left out the most important part that God is the ultimate judge of good and evil, right and wrong. And we have no right or hope of changing that fact no matter how correct we feel we are.

Let me give you a few crude examples:

The sabbath day. God was clear what His standard was for His sabbath day, (Ex 20:8-11)

“8 Remember the **sabbath** day, to keep it **holy**.

9 **Six** days shalt thou **labour**, and do all thy work:

10 But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the Lord thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy **stranger** that *is* within thy gates:

11 For *in six* days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord **blessed** the sabbath day, and **“hallowed** it.”

There isn't much room there for interpretation of God's definition of keeping His sabbath day holy. Yet, we rationalize to ourselves all sorts of things that are not good and we feel it is okay that we do these things because God didn't specifically name this thing that we shouldn't do it on Sunday, so it's okay.

Here is another one that i've mentioned before: the word of wisdom, D&C 89:5,7

“5 That inasmuch as any man **drinketh wine** or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father,”

Then 1 verse later He repeats Himself with an even more direct tone:

“7 And, again, **strong drinks** are not for the belly,”

Oh, come on... God doesn't mean that energy drinks or soda are bad. He is only talking about alcohol. See there...At that point we become the objective moral standard. When we decide to interpret what God means in His commandments we are straying from the path and becoming exactly like the children of Israel in defining our own good and evil, right and wrong.

Instead of rationalizing what God could or should mean in His scriptures. What He asks us to do for understanding is to go to Him in prayer and fasting and seek to know His will.

Nephi understood this; Listen to what God tells him for being diligent in doing and seeking God's will: Helaman 10:4-5

“4 **Blessed** art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with **unwearyingness** declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine **own life**, but hast sought my **will**, and to keep my commandments.

5 And now, because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that **all** things shall be **done** unto thee according to thy **word**, for thou shalt **not** ask that which is contrary to my will.”

Do you think that Nephi justified how he would keep the sabbath day holy or what he needed to drink just to make it through the day. Do you think he rationalized any one of God's commandments? Or do you think he sought to have a personal relationship with God? I believe that he not only prayed but that he listened to what God had to say to him. I believe that when he had a question that he took that to the Lord. I believe that Nephi knew the voice of the Lord and that he relied on it every day of his life.

I pray that you and I will be able to do the same. To know His voice, to rely on His voice. To seek His will always.

In the name of Jesus Chris, Amen.