
Judgment for the Jews

Amos 2:4-16

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When is a preacher, a teacher, a Christian Social Justice warrior like a drunk and a light pole? The drunk is leaning on the light pole more for support than for light. The Scripture is used to support preexisting ideas, not to give light where and how it is needed.

This is not a new thing. From Jewish Rabbis to Catholic priests to ancient and modern liberals and even, well-known evangelical leaders, Bible texts are misused to support their ideas. Sometimes this is called proof-texting. It does not matter who is doing it or for what purpose it is being done, it is wrong to do so. The Bible is not here to serve your agenda, your ideas, your doctrines. You are to submit what you believe to the Bible.

We are now facing the rising tidal wave of Critical Race Theory and Christian Social Justice errors overwhelming the church. As Biblicists have arisen to expose these ideas, the response has been to slip the errors in and call them a necessary exegetical tool. It is argued that without critical theory you cannot understand the Bible for our generation. The aim is not to submit to the Bible, but rather to force the Bible to submit to them.



As a result, then, CRT and CSJ function as frameworks and exegetical lenses that are held over the Bible. They are used to inform, frame, and control the Biblical narrative. Neither are derived from the Scripture. They are being imposed on the Scripture. I don't care who is doing it. It does not matter how elegantly or eloquently a John Piper or a Tim Keller or a David Platt preach it or argue for it, it is still wrong.

Modern Christian social justice advocates rely on texts like Amos 2. They use their critical theory as a lens through which to read the text. But reading the text through any extra-biblical frameworks or lenses ends up distorting if not destroying the text. All frameworks must be in submission to the text, not functioning as sovereign over the text.

Two important reminders you need, and I will say over and over again.

The Gentiles in the Old Testament are representative of all unbelievers in the New. Israel in the Old Testament are representative of believers/church in the New.

The Scriptures, when confronted with the sins and wickedness of Gentiles and unbelievers, pronounces judgment on them. When sin among believers and in the church is exposed, it is confronted, and people are called to repent of it.



Cristian Social Justice often confuses and conflates these with dire effects.

A very simple Lucas Lesson is important here for us here. It is called Text and Framework.



What is the problem on the left? The framework is over the text. The framework is controlling and is sovereign over the text. Instead of the text saying what it really says, it says what the framework dictates.

In some cases, the text is denied or minimized in favor of the framework. This is what tends to happen in the present debate.



Here is the proper relationship. The text informs and interprets the framework. The text must be handled correctly in order to confirm or change the framework. So, when done properly, the text of the Scripture then is sovereign over any framework.

There are logical, doctrinal, and factual answers to Critical Race Theory and Christian Social Justice. But more importantly, there is a scriptural answer that exposes those frameworks as invalid.

One new and last consideration. The Old Testament's commands to Israel only having bearing on the church when they are repeated in the New Testament. We must be very careful taking commands in the Old Testament, the prophetic books in particular, and applying them directly to ourselves. Remember, he is not talking to you, silly.

Therefore, let us start with the text.

Amos 2 has a sevenfold condemnation of wealthy: "they sell the righteous for silver, the needy for a pair of shoes" and "trample the poor". The prophet highlights the inescapability of judgment. They will not escape; fleeing is useless. Many Old Testament themes are alluded to, themes like the exodus from Egypt, the defeat of the Amorites and the long struggle with paganism and idolatry.

Amos 2 also has in it a general structure common to prophetic preaching...

A The Threat Stated and Defined (v.6a)

B The Sin Exposed and Confronted (v.6c-8)

C God's Goodness Rehearsed (v.9-12)

B' The Punishment Declared and Predicted (v.13-16)

A' The Threat Renewed and Justified (v.1-2)

Amos has preached against the wickedness of the nations around Israel. Their judgments are coming. But now, Amos turns the spotlight of his preaching on Israel.

Their Disregard for the Word of God (v.1-5)

God's people have disregarded God's Word.

⁴ Thus says the Lord:

"For three transgressions of Judah,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they have rejected the law of the Lord,
and have not kept his statutes, but their lies have led them astray,
those after which their fathers walked.

⁵ So I will send a fire upon Judah,
and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem."

The Patience Ended (v.4a)

Amos is speaking for the Lord. He is not judging Israel himself. This is what God is declaring. God's patience has come to an end. Using the formula, the idiom that says, "After all this time, now for the last time," God will judge Judah, the southern kingdom. This is significant because Judah was the royal tribe and the center of the kingdom and temple worship.

The Evil Exposed (v.4b)

Judah's evil is called "transgressions". They have committed multiple transgressions.

They have rejected God's Word.

How did Judah reject God's Word? Was it some formal declaration? No, their rejection of God's Word was functional. Their rejection was personal and practical.

They have not obeyed God's Word.

They did not keep the statutes from the Mosaic Law. Disobedience of God's clear commands is to disregard God's Word. Not only did Israel refuse to

obey God's Word, but their leaders created additional commands, therefore adding to God's Word.

They have substituted lies for God's Word.

Religious and political leadership had believed lies and myths. Those lies and myths were leading the people away from the Word. These were not new to Amos' generation. They were the rehashing, remaking, reformulating of old deceptions that long had plagued Israel.

The Judgment Promised (v.5)

God will send the fire of judgment on Judah and level her fortresses. The fire is representative of God's judgment. God's judgment often came in the form of foreign invaders. The fortresses here are literal forts that had been built all over Judah.

Paul in the New Testament writes in 2 Corinthians 10:3–6:

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶ being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Jesus condemned the religious leadership of His day for both disobedience and for adding to the Word of God. The early church was little different, struggling often to maintain the integrity of obedience and liberty. Now we see the disregard for the Word of God as new commands, new priorities, a new mission of the church. This is evil. This is transgression and rebellion at a high level. We may all err in many ways. We may all sin as we live in a fallen world. We may receive mercy and grace for our many sins. We must be on the guard ourselves that we do not disregard the Scriptures. But for the repeated disregard of God's Word, we need to rise with unmistakable voices and powerful preaching to denounce any and all who functionally reject and disregard the Word of God. We will denounce any who will use their lies and myths to make the Scripture say what it certainly does not say. They are leading God's people astray. They are splitting churches and dividing ministries. We are taking our stand against it. If you are entertaining these errors, repent. Turn back to truth. Reject the lies and myths. Do not disregard God's Word.

Their Abuse of their Wealth and Power (v.6-8)

The wealthy among God's people abused their power and position.

⁶ Thus says the Lord:

“For three transgressions of Israel,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they sell the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of sandals—

⁷ those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth

and turn aside the way of the afflicted;
a man and his father go in to the same girl,
so that my holy name is profaned;
⁸ they lay themselves 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.

Amos repeats the formula that speaks of both God's long patience and His certain punishment. This denunciation now turns on Israel, the northern 10 tribes. The sins that have brought God to the end of His patience are different but no less wicked.

Their Social Sins (v.6-7)

Israel is being judged for her injustice. The courts had become corrupt. The "righteous" person is someone who was innocent before the law, an honorable person. But they were charged and were declared guilty because the judges were accepting the bribes in silver. So, the rich were able to destroy the honorable and the innocent through bribing the judges. But the poor? They were being sold for the price of a pair of shoes. They were seen as having little value, so justice was being perverted for them at a very low, demeaning price.

The helpless were being trampled into the ground, a phrase we still use today. The rich and powerful were using their position and wealth to shoulder the weak and the oppressed aside. There was no recourse for them. When they appeared in the courts to redress wrongs, they were simply pushed aside.

Does this happen in the world in our culture today? Yes. Does this text condemn that? Yes. But this is not speaking to the Gentiles around Israel. This is speaking to Israel. Remember our principle? Israel is a type of and foreshadows the church. The analogy here is not for us be seeking to correct the legal and social injustices *in the world around us*. The expose' here would be applied to the church.

God forbid that the materially rich and socially powerful *in the church* take advantage of the poor and the weak. This is a dreadful sin against our Christian brothers. The equivalent to what Amos is preaching against here is what James warns us about in James 2:1-4. We will often find James alluding to or drawing from Amos.

2 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ² For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³ and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," ⁴ have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Brothers and sisters, we are not responsible to redress the injustices in the world. But we will confront and condemn injustices in the church. Each Biblical church should be sure that there are no distinctions in the church along these lines.

Israel is also being condemned for her immorality (v.7). The depravity and degradation had descended into incest and fornication. The father and son were having sex with the same woman, probably the father's wife, but may be sharing girlfriends, prostitutes, or the priestesses in the pagan temples. The way this is written leaves it open to all. This was in direct violation of the Mosaic Law with the result that it corrupted the passing on the inheritance and poisoned the family lines.

Immorality of all kinds existed in the early church. Paul, Peter, and Jude all wrote against it. Consider 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 in the NLT:

I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you—something that even pagans don't do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother. ²You are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship.

Make no mistake, with the acceptance of intersectionality and the LGBTQ agenda in the church, we are soon going to be dealing with the grossest of immorality. We are already having to think about how to help same-sex couples and transgender people who have become saved or have repented of their sins.

Their Religious Sins (v.8)

The injustice of the rich and powerful even show up in their religious celebrations. In Israel, pagan festivals were celebrated. Pagan idols were worshipped in pagan temples. Some have commented that Amos may actually be talking about how degraded the religion of the Mosaic Law had become. It had become indistinguishable from the pagans around them. The pagan practices were simply imported into Jewish worship and soon had displaced true worship.

The rich and the powerful were flaunting their wealth and oppression of people. What they had extorted from people was being worn and money from unjust fines used to support their drunkenness.

Jesus denounced the abuses by the moneychangers in the Temple. What they were doing was simply a different form of what Amos was preaching against. But this behavior marked the church at Corinth. Their abuses at the Lord's Table, their mistreatment of the poor, the lowly, the slaves in the church were intolerable. They had corrupted their worship and were so pagan that they were getting drunk at the Agape Feast and Lord's Table.

Their Ungratefulness in Forgetting of the Lord's Work (v.9-11)

In forgetting what the Lord had done, they forgot who the Lord was!

⁹ “Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them,
whose height was like the height of the cedars
and who was as strong as the oaks;
I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath.

¹⁰ Also it was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt
and led you forty years in the wilderness,
to possess the land of the Amorite.

¹¹ And I raised up some of your sons for prophets,
and some of your young men for Nazirites.
Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?”
declares the Lord.

The Lord's Destruction of their Enemy (v.9)

They had forgotten and therefore were ungrateful for God’s destruction of their mortal enemies. Why the Amorites? They were the most corrupt, depraved, and wicked of the Canaanites. They were powerful and ruthless. They also had resurrected the wickedness of Noah’s day that led to the flood. Yes, God had held Israel in Egypt for 400 years until the “wickedness of the Amorites was full.” In the conquest of the land, powerfully led by Joshua, God had overcome the worst of the wicked in the land. He destroyed them from fruit, to branch, to trunk to root.

Simply, have we forgotten and are no longer grateful for the greater Joshua, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has gone before us and destroyed the power of sin, its tree and its root?

The Lord's Deliverance from Slavery (v.10)

They had forgotten and therefore were ungrateful for their deliverance from Egypt. They had been brought up out of slavery. They were led safely through the wilderness. They arrived safely in the promised land so that they actually possessed it. This narrative is about how they became the people of God. Now they no longer savor the saving work of God.

How has the church forgotten her deliverance from sin? By replacing the centrality of the gospel with other gospels that are false gospels. The church’s mission has become more about social change than gospel preaching, both to the lost and to the believer.

The Lord's Enabling of Ministry (v.11)

They had forgotten and were therefore ungrateful for how the Lord had enabled preaching ministries among them. Prophets and Nazirites were specially called and appointed to minister to the people. The primary focus was on their preaching and their purity. But they did not recognize and even seemed to deny that God had done this *for their good*.

Their Resistance to the Ministry of the Word (v.12)

The people of Israel openly opposed the ministry of the Word.

¹² “But you made the Nazirites drink wine,
and commanded the prophets,
saying, ‘You shall not prophesy.’

Two ways that they resisted the ministry.

The Corruption of the Lord's Servants

They encouraged the Nazirites to drink wine. This was forbidden of them. To encourage it was to corrupt these servants of God. Corrupted by the people, their ministry power was eroded.

The Opposition to the Lord's Preaching

Instead of submitting to the prophets' preaching, they openly opposed it. They demanded that the prophets shut up. They refused to hear and to heed. They tried to silence them. They tried to cancel them.

In the modern context, we face both. The ministry is being eroded by corruption and disqualification. This has not been so much through drunkenness, but through immorality and defection from truth. The purity of pulpits has been eroded by the impurity of the preachers. What many more are experiencing is the dreadful effects of the cancel culture as we oppose all the errors invading the church. There are attempts to silence. There are false charges leveled against good men. People just rise up and tell preachers to shut up. This is not so different from what happened to Paul at Corinth. They tried to silence him when he was preaching. They tried to cancel him in his writing. We take heart from Paul and will continue to plead and to pray and to trust in our Sovereign God.

Their Judgment at the Hands of the Lord (v.13-15)

What will the judgment look like that God is bringing?

¹³ “Behold, I will press you down in your place,
as a cart full of sheaves presses down.

¹⁴ Flight shall perish from the swift,
and the strong shall not retain his strength,
nor shall the mighty save his life;

¹⁵ he who handles the bow shall not stand,
and he who is swift of foot shall not save himself,
nor shall he who rides the horse save his life;

¹⁶ and he who is stout of heart among the mighty
shall flee away naked in that day,”
declares the Lord.

These judgments were eloquent pictures of the literal punishments that God would bring. Make no mistake, the Lord did bring them. We know this from the Bible and from history. For the sake of time though, I want to take these images and illuminate them for our age.

Stressed - Groaning under Weight

They will feel the weight of God pressing down on them. God will use these times to sift the church. People will rightly stand against error they hear from their pulpits. Biblical preachers will stand against the errors among their people and among their colleagues. The stress, the pressure on the church will eventually show who are the true. This was true in Corinth. This has been true down through the ages. Division in the church is often used by God sift out the tares and leave the wheat. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:17–19 (NLT):

¹⁷ But in the following instructions, I cannot praise you. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together. ¹⁸ First, I hear that there are divisions among you when you meet as a church, and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹ But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that you who have God's approval will be recognized!

Weak - Defeated in the Battle

They will experience defeat. Even the strongest among them will not be able to overcome. When error infects the church, even strong, Biblical churches are affected. The advance of the gospel may falter in place and may be weakened in others.

Fear - Running from...

They will be filled with fear and unable to escape the consequences of their errors. How many evangelical churches have allowed frameworks to stand as king over the texts? How about the evolution? How about psychology? How about nationalism? How about socialism? Now, what chance do they have to stand against the powerful and persuasive effect of Critical Race Theory, Intersectional Theory and non-binary gender theories. They don't. They can't. They won't. They have already given up the kingship of the Word over other frameworks, they will have no answer to the new ones.

Reflect and Respond

Do not disregard God's Word.

Do not be ungrateful for all the good that God has done for you.

Do not resist the Biblical ministry of God's Word and His true churches.

Realize that your stress, your weakness, your fears are simply the consequences and the chastening of God.

Finally, our commitment from 2 Corinthian 10:3-6 in the New Living Translation.

³We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. ⁴We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. ⁵We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ. ⁶And after you have become fully obedient, we will punish everyone who remains disobedient.