



Part 2
Why is God So Angry?



The point of this study

The goal of every Inspire study is to draw closer to Jesus Christ. In this series, we will explore the role of the prophets through the ministry of Amos. Though each prophet has a unique voice and message, Amos gives us a powerful glimpse into the prophetic tradition and its call to justice, faithfulness, and readiness to encounter God. As we listen to his challenge to "Prepare to meet your God," we will discover what the prophets still have to teach us today.

This study draws on the Four Ancient Lenses of Interpretation, which are introduced in the Inspire video series **How to Read the Bible (Part 2)**. These lenses help us engage Scripture more deeply, exploring its literary, theological, kingdom, and ethical dimensions.

The check-in & opening prayer

We know that what we bring to the study can impact what we take from the study. So, let's take a moment to check in with ourselves and to ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate our heart. You can do this through personal journaling or by sharing with the group.



I wonder what was a highlight of your week.

**I wonder where you may have needed
prayer or support this week.**

I wonder where you noticed God at work this week.

I wonder what you are bringing to this study.
(questions, concerns, distractions, hopes, fears, learnings...).

I wonder what you hope to receive from God through this study.

Holy God,
open our eyes to see the world as you see it, open our ears to hear
your voice through the prophets, and open our hearts to be
transformed by your truth. Give us courage to seek your justice,
hope to trust your kingdom, and faithfulness to follow your call;
through Jesus Christ, your living Word,
our friend and helper. Amen.

Context (read and reflect)

Reading Scripture through the *Literary Lens*.

Amos begins his prophecy with a carefully staged surprise. Speaking to the prosperous northern kingdom of Israel, his first words of judgement are directed safely outward. **Damascus**, the capital of Aram, was a longstanding military rival; **Gaza** represents the Philistine cities, another traditional enemy. **Tyre**, the wealthy Phoenician city to the north, had enjoyed close relations with Israel but is accused of betraying those bonds. Then Amos moves closer. **Edom** was Israel's brother nation, descended from Esau; **Ammon** and **Moab**, neighbours east of the Jordan, were also connected to Israel's ancestral story. We can imagine Amos's audience nodding enthusiastically as the circle tightens: Damascus? Absolutely. Gaza? About time. Tyre? They deserve it. Edom, Ammon, Moab? Yes — God sees what they have done! With every repetition of "**For three transgressions, and for four**," Amos draws his listeners further into agreement.

I wonder why we can become enthusiastic about the downfall of those we consider our political enemies.



Then Amos crosses into **Judah**, Israel's sister kingdom to the south. The circle has become uncomfortably close — but his northern audience may still have enjoyed hearing their rivals in Jerusalem condemned. And then comes the trap: "For three transgressions of **Israel**, and for four". Those listening to Amos pronounce judgement on everyone else suddenly discover that they are standing in the dock. Amos lingers over Israel's sins: "they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals"; they trample the poor, exploit the vulnerable, and profane what is holy. Amos has moved from our enemies, to our neighbours, to our religious cousins, and finally to us. The God whose justice Israel welcomed when directed at others turns out to be the God who sees Israel just as clearly. **What if God's judgement is easier to recognize when it is directed at someone else?**

I wonder why we find it easier to see the speck in another's eye than the plank in our own.



Scripture (mark and note)

*Reading Scripture through the **Literary Lens**. Remember that Amos was first **heard, not read**. His words were proclaimed aloud, so repetition, rhythm, imagery, and changes in tone are part of how his message works. As you read, circle, underline, and make notes on the passage. Notice repeated words and phrases, rhythms and patterns, vivid images and metaphors, surprising words, and connections to other parts of Scripture. Throughout this study, you will begin to **hear and feel the rhythm of the prophet**. Mark the text with what you notice, what surprises you, and what you sense the Spirit drawing your attention toward.*

Selections from Amos 1 & 2

The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of King Uzziah of Judah and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

And he said:

The Lord roars from Zion
and utters his voice from Jerusalem;
the pastures of the shepherds wither,
and the top of Carmel dries up.

Thus says the Lord:

For three transgressions of Damascus,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they have threshed Gilead
with threshing sledges of iron.
So I will send a fire on the house of Hazael,
and it shall devour the strongholds of Ben-hadad.
I will break the gate bars of Damascus
and cut off the inhabitants from the Valley of Aven
and the one who holds the scepter from Beth-eden,
and the people of Aram shall go into exile to Kir,
says the Lord.

Thus says the Lord:

For three transgressions of Gaza,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they carried into exile entire communities,
to hand them over to Edom.

Thus says the Lord:

For three transgressions of Tyre,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they delivered entire communities over to Edom
and did not remember the covenant of kinship.

Thus says the Lord:

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;
he maintained his anger perpetually
and kept his wrath forever.

Thus says the Lord:

For three transgressions of the Ammonites,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead
in order to enlarge their territory.

Thus says the Lord:

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.

Thus says the Lord:

For three transgressions of Judah,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they have rejected the instruction of the Lord
and have not kept his statutes,
but they have been led astray by the same lies
after which their ancestors walked.
So I will send a fire on Judah,
and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem.

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—
they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth
and push the afflicted out of the way;
father and son go in to the same young woman,
so that my holy name is profaned;
they lay themselves down beside every altar
on garments taken in pledge;
and in the house of their God they drink
wine bought with fines they imposed.

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

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

And I raised up some of your children to be prophets
and some of your youths to be nazirites.
Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?
says the Lord.

But you made the nazirites drink wine
and commanded the prophets,
saying, "You shall not prophesy."

So, I will press you down in your place,
just as a cart presses down
when it is full of sheaves.

Flight shall perish from the swift,
and the strong shall not retain their strength,
nor shall the mighty save their lives;
those who handle the bow shall not stand,
and those who are swift of foot shall not save themselves,
nor shall those who ride horses save their lives;
and those who are stout of heart among the mighty
shall flee away naked on that day,
says the Lord.

Why is God so angry?

*Reading Scripture through the **Theological Lens**.*

Amos begins with an angry God. Cities will burn, kingdoms will fall, and people will be held accountable. These can be difficult words to hear. But before we decide what we think about God's anger, it is worth asking a more important question: What is God angry about?

I wonder how you feel about an angry God.



Look again at the accusations Amos makes. People are subjected to brutal violence. Entire communities are captured and sold. Covenants of kinship are betrayed. A brother is pursued with the sword and compassion is cast aside. Pregnant women are killed for the sake of acquiring territory. Even the dead are desecrated. When Amos finally turns to Israel, the violence takes other forms: the poor are exploited, the vulnerable are pushed aside, sexual power is abused, and people are treated as commodities. Again and again, Amos describes human beings failing in their responsibility for one another.

I wonder what the things that anger God reveal about the things God loves.



God's anger in Amos therefore tells us something about God. God cares deeply about what human beings do to one another. The suffering of another person matters to God — even when that person belongs to another nation. Israel's special relationship with God does not excuse its behaviour. The God Amos invites us to meet is a God who hears the suffering caused by violence, exploitation and cruelty and refuses to call it insignificant.

I wonder what responsibilities God has given us for one another.



Sharing

*Reading Scripture through the **Kingdom of God Lens**.*

I wonder what kind of world Amos invites us to imagine God desires.

I wonder what Amos reveals about the place of violence and exploitation in God's kingdom.

I wonder how God's kingdom challenges the divisions between "us" and "them."

*Reading the Scripture through the **Ethical Lens**.*

I wonder where we might benefit from systems that harm or exploit other people.

I wonder who God has entrusted to our care.

I wonder what it would look like for us to take greater responsibility for one another this week.

You may close in prayer.



The Parish of St. Mark – Ocean Park