

Amos: The Nobody From Nowhere
Chapter 2
Amos 1:11-2:3

“Edom, Ammon, and Moab”, just the mention of the names would have invoked a visceral reaction from the Israelites! Amos had begun his sermon by pronouncing God’s judgment upon the pagan nations with no real “*blood ties*” to the Israelites, but in the following verses, he shifted his attention a bit closer to home as it were. The Edomites, Ammonites, and Moabites were all considered to be Semitic peoples from the lineage of Abraham.

The Edomites were the direct descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. And even before the birth of these two brothers, a struggle ensued. Esau, who was actually first in the birth order, was summarily rejected by God, Who chose the younger brother, Jacob, to carry on the covenant blessings given to Abraham.

Isaac prayed to The LORD on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The LORD was receptive to his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. But the children inside her struggled with each other, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of The LORD. And The LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb; two peoples will come from you and be separated. One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.” When her time came to give birth, there were indeed twins in her womb. The first one came out red-looking, covered with hair like a fur coat, and they named him Esau. After this, his bother came out grading Esau’s heel with his hand. So he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born. **Genesis 25:21-26**

When we continue reading the narrative of these two boys in Genesis, we find that Esau was a *man’s man*, self-sufficient and strong, while Jacob was a *momma’s boy*, conniving and ever desperately seeking to gain advantage for himself. Jacob the trickster would eventually go so far as to deceive both Esau and his own father Isaac, to obtain both the Covenant birthright and the Covenant blessing that should have gone to the elder bother. And even though the two eventually came to some surface level of reconciliation, there was never to be complete trust between them. And because of this generational animosity, the Edomites were no great lovers of the Israelites.

Fast forward a thousand plus years to the days of Amos the prophet, and we see this ancient struggle raging on. God was about to visit his wrath upon the people of Edom, who had brutalized the Israelites in every conceivable way; not only in warfare, but in cruel bondage, for the Edomites relished the opportunity to not only capture Jewish slaves, but were more than willing to purchase them from the pagan nations who waged war against Israel (**Amos 1:7,9**).

The Israelites had been commanded never to war against Edom, for God declared that they were “brothers” (**Deuteronomy 2:1-7**), but the Edomites recognized no such directive. And for centuries they became a thorn in Israel’s side. King David made them a vassal state after they attacked Israel during his reign. And the conflict raged on from there. When Amos began to preach upon the coming destruction of Edom, there must have been many shouts of approval from the audience. What would have been unbeknown to his listeners at the onset was that God was slowly drawing the noose tighter and tighter in regards to His righteous anger, and it would not stop only with Israel’s neighborhood rivals, but would eventually come to rest upon the neck of Israel herself!

The next group of “relatives” on God’s hit list were the Ammonites. These wicked people along with their direct cousins the Moabites, had to say the least an ignominious beginning. They both came into being as a result of incestuous relationships between a drunken Lot, Abraham’s wayward nephew,

and his two daughters. This occurred after Lot was miraculously delivered from the destruction of Sodom by the two angels sent from God to rescue him on Abraham's behalf (**Genesis 19:1-29**).

After Lot was delivered and his not so faithful wife became a pillar of salt, apparently Lot was in a mood of self-pity which allowed his morally compromised daughters to persuade him to drink away his troubles. And from there the story takes an even more sordid turn, the likes of which even the most nihilistic producers of Hollywood would hesitate to proffer:

Lot departed from Zoar and lived in the mountains along with his two daughters, because he was afraid to live in Zoar. Instead, he and his two daughters lived in a cave. Then the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man in the land to sleep with us as is the custom of all the land. Come, let's get our father to drink wine so that we can sleep with him and preserve our father's line." So they got their father to drink wine that night, and the firstborn came and slept with her father; he did not know when she lay down or when she got up. The next day the firstborn said to the younger, "Look, I slept with my father last night. Let's get him to drink wine again tonight so you can go sleep with him and we can preserve our father's line." That night they again got their father to drink wine, and the younger went and slept with him; he did not know when she lay down or when she got up. So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. The firstborn gave birth to a son and named him Moab. He is the father of the Moabites today. The younger also gave birth to a son, and she named him, Ben-ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites of today. **Genesis 19:30-38**

When we read of such atrocities committed by these Semitic people; the vicious attacks upon Israel by the Edomites (**vs. 11**), the atrocities of the invading Ammonites in their lust for more territory, going so far as to cut the unborn children from the wombs of their mothers in the most horrific form of genocide imaginable (**vs. 13**), and ultimately the treachery they visited even upon each other as the Moabites did to the Edomites (**vs. 2:1**), it is inconceivable to us that all of these people were descendants of Abraham himself! How is it possible that from a tree rooted in such great faith, could branches spring forth that are so corrupt and twisted? The answer is really quite simple. Sin quite often leads us into a slow progression of rebellion, one compromise at a time.

The trouble with Moab and Ammon, began with the compromising nature of their paternal ancestor Lot. Lot was Abraham's nephew, and as we can clearly see in Scripture, he was a man who always kept an eye out for number one. He would have never even made it to Canaan had it not been for the generosity of his childless uncle who took him in as his own and shared his possessions with him. As God blessed Abraham, Lot was blessed by default. And it would stand to reason that he would have been grateful, but unfortunately, most who are given treasures which they did not earn have no real understanding from whence they came.

As time progressed, and Lot became more and more powerful, his herdsmen began to cause trouble for Abraham's servants, so the two decided to separate. Abraham, being the generous soul that he was, gave Lot his choice of ground to claim as his own. Lot did not stray from his selfish nature, choosing the most fertile pasture that he could see with his lustful gaze. Trouble being, the land he picked was in close proximity to Sodom, a city that was known for its unquenchable thirst for debauchery.

Lot moved his family and flocks to the outskirts of the city. I'm sure his original thought was to go this far and no further. But sin...has a way. I once heard a preacher say, "Sin will take you further than you wanted to go, keep you longer than you wanted to stay, and cost you more than you wanted to pay." *Truth!* And just like sin always does, Lot ended up through a series of events, not just living near Sodom, but within its city walls. Were it not for God's undeserved grace and mercy, Lot and his family would have shared in the evil city's fate. But God sent angels to rescue him.

I have heard it said that what you do in moderation, your children will do in excess. So we should not be surprised when we read of the goings on that took place in the darkness of Lot's cave. He had

raised his children in a land of debauchery in order to gain financial standing and political status, and his children simply continued the progression down the same road which he had started by his own personal compromises of faith. So many years later, his descendants, namely Moab and Ammon were ripe for the judgment they had so wickedly inherited. Lot wasn't appreciative of the grace shown him by his uncle Abraham, nor was he appreciative of the grace bestowed upon him by God Himself. His tragic life bears the shame and consequences of one who is consumed with the disease of *self-love*.

The slow fade of the Edomites also began with their father Esau. From the start, Esau was what we would consider to be a man's man, the self-sufficient type. He was the rugged outdoorsman who provided for himself as a hunter. It isn't any wonder why he was the favorite son of his father Isaac. He would have been the kind of kid who would have been the star athlete, the quarterback on the high school football team. His bother Jacob on the other hand would have been too busy hiding behind his mother's skirts to garner much pride from his father.

We get flashes of Esau's character sprinkled in bits and pieces in the Scriptures; choosing to despise his own birthright in order to satisfy his hunger in the moment, and marrying foreign pagan women to the dismay of his parents, these are telltale signs of a person who has no regard for the things of God. If Esau was your next door neighbor, he would probably be a likable enough person. He might even qualify as what we often refer to in the south as a "*good ol' boy*". He believed in God, but not enough to submit himself to the God that he claimed to believe. I have met so many "Esau's in my life, and sadly enough, many of them call themselves believers. But in reality, the only *god* they truly serve is their own selfish desire. So is it really any wonder that the Edomites followed in their ancestor's footsteps? Esau had most certainly set the bar pretty low.

So why does all of this matter? It matters because God keeps a record. And there is a way that seems good to a person, but it leads to death (***Proverbs 14:12***). And a person's priorities reveals what is in their heart. The LORD offers grace to all who would believe in His Son, and submit themselves to His will. That is what *LORD* means. You cannot say "*No LORD*", for when you do, He is not your LORD. To escape the coming judgment of God, we must align ourselves with Him and not against Him.

As we have previously said, I have no doubt when the Israelites heard this first portion of Amos' prophecy, they would have been overjoyed to hear of the coming destruction to those whom the Israelites had long despised. The words, "*For three crimes, even four.*" must have sounded like music to their ears. But what they did not expect was that God had also kept detailed records of His own people as well, for Israel and even Judah had lived in rebellion to His commands.

I find in the first portion of the second chapter of Amos a compelling statement that was directed to the people of Moab, but should have served as a warning to Israel, and to us today as well.

I will cut off the judge from the land and kill all its officials with him.

Amos 2:3

You see, the Moabites had determined that the Edomites were to be judged and destroyed for their wickedness, and they had executed that judgment by overthrowing the kingdom and burning the king's bones to ashes. But in their zeal to judge another nation, they had failed to recognize their own wickedness. But God who is above all...sees all. And He vowed to destroy these corrupt judges with a vengeance. The same is true for us. We who think that we are better than others, who condemn the sins of others all the while condoning our own transgressions, must beware. For God keeps immaculate records. We must repent of our own sins, or we will never truly be able to correct the sins of others. And even then, we do not judge to condemn others, but rather we long to reconcile them to the same God who has forgiven us.

Why do you look at the splinter in your brother's eye but don't notice the beam of wood in our own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the splinter out of your eye," and look, there is a beam of wood in your own eye? Hypocrites! First take the beam of wood out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother's eye. ***Matthew 7:3-5***

To understand the book of Amos is to understand that God is no respecter of persons. All who reject His grace will be judged according to their own works. And when God confronts us in the light of our own righteousness, then no one will be able to stand. So we need so much more. We need to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ Jesus, to be washed clean by the blood of His sacrifice upon the cross. We need saving, and thanks be to God, that salvation has been freely given to all who come to faith by Him. I for one do not wish to be judged according to my own merit. I prefer to be justified by the holiness of Christ. For as the Apostle Paul has so eloquently stated:

**Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, because
The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.
Romans 8:1-2**