



SIN IS SERIOUS

Lesson 6

villagebible.church/amos

DEVOTIONAL

*"All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say,
'Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.'"
—Amos 9:10*

In our postmodern secular world many people no longer believe in the reality of sin. Alan Mann writes in his book, *Atonement for a Sinless Society*, that "geneticists, sociologists, and psychologists increasingly ... allow us to live in the confidence that we do no wrong."

And as for the death of Christ, "To twenty-first-century sensibilities, the crucifixion of Jesus [is] nothing more than a primitive, barbaric, pointless death."

Part of Mann's thesis is that the best way for secular peoples to come to terms with sin is to be presented with this: *Sin is relational defilement, uncleanness, pollution.*

Consider the relational defilement that most secular peoples readily acknowledge: poverty of all kinds ... *racism and bigotry* ... sexual trafficking ... *an epidemic of addictions* ... the persistence of slavery ... *institutional greed and corruption* ... violent nationalism ... *honor-killings* ... bloody culture clashes.

What does it all add up to? A dirty, traumatized, defiled, *relationally polluted world!*

In this world of sin, *I am unclean*. Isaiah observed: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips and dwell among a people of unclean lips ..." (Isa. 6:5).

...The writer of Hebrews said of the death and atonement of Christ: "So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order that he might sanctify the people through his own blood" (Heb. 13:12). In his death, Jesus became unclean—he "suffered outside the gate." Why? "...in order that he might sanctify the people"—in order to cleanse the people. Through His death, Jesus became unclean in order to make believers clean forever.^[1]

Sin is serious, it is so serious that God gave the best that heaven had to offer to pay the price for our sins. Nevertheless, the attitude that our world has toward sin has slowly infiltrated the church. We need to have a true understanding of sin and how abhorrent it is to our God. He gave Jesus to us to put away sin, not so that we would continue in it (cf. Hebrews 9:26)! As we explore Amos together today, we will find that Israel became passive and apathetic toward sin. May that never be said of us! May we go back to the wonderful good news of Jesus who came to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself! He took our sins upon Himself so that we would not be condemned, but so that we would be able to be with Him! Hallelujah, what a gospel! Hallelujah, what a Savior!

OPEN IT

1. Have you ever had a favorite outfit that got stained? What was it? What happened?

READ IT

Amos 7:1-9:10

EXPLORE IT

2. What is God preparing in 7:1?
3. How many times did Amos intercede with God in 7:1-6?
4. What did God show Amos in 7:7?
5. What is Amos accused of in 7:10?
6. What is Amos told to do in 7:12?
7. What is Amos shown in 8:1?
8. What does God promise to do in 8:7?
9. What does God promise to do to Israel in 8:9-14?
10. What is God focused on in 9:8?

APPLY IT

Being familiar with agriculture, Amos realized that the locusts would devastate the crops of Israel, so he interceded to God on Israel's behalf for God to relent.

11. What does Amos' intercession tell us about how He viewed the Israelites?

12. Amos interceded for Israel and prayed for God to stay His judgment (7:2-3; 5-6). Should we intercede for others before God so that He might stay His judgment? If so, why don't we do this more often?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? PLUMB LINE (7:7-8)

A plumb line, also called a plummet, is a cord with a non-magnetic weight attached to one end. When the cord is held in such a way that the weight can dangle freely, an exact vertical can be determined. Painters and carpenters use plumb lines to keep their work straight. It is difficult, while in the middle of a project, to determine a true horizontal or vertical line without an objective measuring tool, so a plumb line is employed. A plumb line applies the law of gravity to find right angles, to indicate the most direct route from top to bottom, and to keep things plumb. A plumb line doesn't change or move with the whims of the carpenter. It remains true, and all work must line up with it or risk being crooked.^[2]

13. What is the plumb line by which God judges us today?

14. Amos is accused by Amaziah of trying to initiate a coup d'état and is told not to speak God's words to them anymore (7:10-11). Who around us are trying to keep us from speaking God's Word today? How are we to respond?

15. What do we do when people tell us that they don't want to hear from us what God has to say (cf. 7:14-16)?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? "...YOU YOURSELF SHALL DIE IN AN UNCLEAN LAND."—AMOS 7:17

We often hear of sin as "missing the mark." And while it is true, it is only one description of sin. Sin is not only personal, it is also relational and social. The Bible uses such terms such as "defilement," "uncleanness, and "pollution." Because God is absolutely holy, pure, and unclean, cleanness is considered to be that which defiles, pollutes, and separates—both from God and greater society. This is why Isaiah said, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips and dwell among a people of unclean lips ..." (Isa. 6:5).

Sin is personal and it is social. In order for God to show how pure and separate He is from us, He put in His Word a series of purity laws in the OT (Leviticus contains most of them) so that we might understand the purity and separateness that God requires. To be "unclean" meant to be an outcast both from God and from society. And to be in an unclean land meant that we were in a perpetual unclean state incapable of getting right with God relationally. It also meant being an outcast socially and kept in a condition of shame socially and psychologically.

Honor and shame are one's social capital. Honor is limited and not everyone can have it (although everyone can have and be shame). Honor is opinion that good people have of you and shame is the bad opinion with the additional feeling, awareness, and knowledge that one is less than and unworthy of good. One doesn't have shame in Honor/Shame cultures, one becomes shame.

In the Ancient Near East, honor was bestowed upon a person because of their position or their accomplishment. Shame is different—it is what you become when good people view you poorly, lowly, or less than because of your position or some evil you have done. In the U.S., a public perception of guilt can be atoned for by public confession and seeking of forgiveness. But the same is not true with shame. One can only get out of a shameful position if a person of a higher social standing lifts them up. When Israel is said to be an unclean land, it meant that the people are guilty of sin and shame—they are defiled, dirty and kept in a perpetual state of being outside and away from God—subject to further shame, loss of honor, and being remembered poorly. To the ancient mind (which valued legacy and being remembered greatly as well as held the belief that how one died affected their afterlife), such a thought of dying in an undefiled land was beyond tragic. The thought would be terrifying.

16. What would Israel's dying in the land and being taken from the land in exile have meant in the minds of Amos' listeners? Is there anything comparable to that mindset in our culture today that would be equally as abhorrent?

17. If God doesn't miss anything we have done (8:7), then how can we find forgiveness? Is God capable of or able to forget our sins (cf. Hebrews 8:12)?
18. God declares that He will fix His eyes upon Israel for "evil and not for good" (9:4). Why do we believe that God always wills good for us? Is that a correct belief (cf. Job 2:10)?
19. The Israelites believed that they were beyond judgment (cf. 9:10), and many Christians say the same thing. We are told that there is no more condemnation for those of us who are in Christ (Romans 8:1), but we are also told that judgment is to begin with the household of God (1 Peter 4:17). How can we reconcile these two Scriptures? What should each of these Scriptures mean to us?
20. What is one thing that God is showing you that He wants you to do in light of this lesson?

[1] Werner Mischke, "Jesus Makes Us Clean," July 20, 2016, <https://wernerischke.org/2016/07/20/jesus-makes-us-clean/>, accessed on 5 July 2019.

[2] "What is a Plumb Line in the Bible?," <https://www.gotquestions.org/plumb-line-Bible.html>, accessed on 5 July 2019.

Note: This study was compiled and questions were written by Pastor Travis Fleming, Village Bible Church. www.villagebible.church/smallgroups