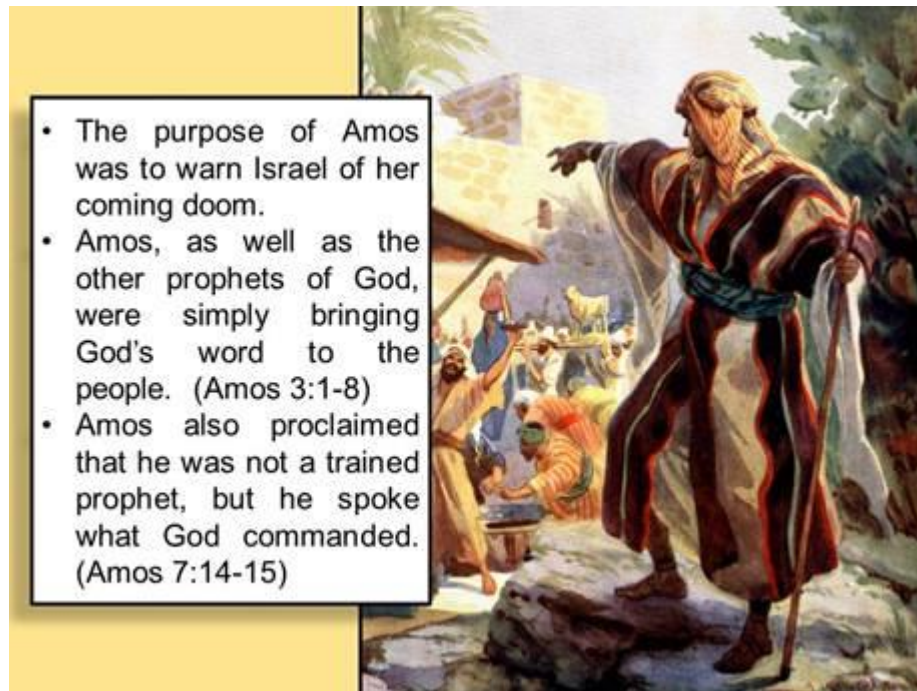


## God's Judgment on Secularized/Mammonized/Babylonized Israel— and lessons for America/us



One sure sign that a fellow American Christian has been become secularized/Mammonized/Babylonized is when he judges the health and even greatness of our nation primarily by economic prosperity. The issue is no longer about integrity in the leaders or social justice for the most vulnerable. It is all about the buck, his buck—and, of course, his culture, way of life, and status quo.

However, let us remember that when God destroyed Israel in 587 B.C. via the Assyrians, Israel was extremely prosperous.

**Amos 6:4** Who lie on beds of ivory, Stretch out on your couches, Eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall; <sup>5</sup> Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, *And* invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; <sup>6</sup> Who drink wine from bowls, And anoint yourselves with the best ointments, But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

Behind the facade of prosperity and fantastic economic growth, Amos saw oppression of the poor. He saw the rich *"trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth"* (2:7). He saw that the lifestyle of the rich was built on oppression of the poor (6:1–7).

It was during this period that there was no justice in the land, and the poor were afflicted, exploited, and even sold into slavery:

**Amos 2:6** Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its *punishment*, Because they sell the righteous for silver, And the poor for a pair of sandals. <sup>7</sup> They pant after the dust of the earth *which is* on the head of the poor, And pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the *same* girl, To defile My holy name. <sup>8</sup> They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge, And drink the wine of the condemned *in* the house of their god.

**Amos 5:11** Therefore, because you impose heavy rent on the poor And exact a tribute of grain from them, *Though* you have built houses of well-hewn stone, Yet you will not live in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine.

Archaeologists have confirmed Amos's picture of shocking extremes of wealth and poverty. In the early days of settlement in Canaan, the land was distributed more or less equally among the families and tribes. Most Israelites enjoyed a similar standard of living. In fact, archaeologists have found that houses as late as the tenth century BC were all approximately the same size.

But by Amos's day, two centuries later, everything had changed. Bigger, better built houses were found in one area and poorer houses were huddled together in another section. No wonder Amos warned the rich, "*You have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them*" (5:11)!

God's word through Amos was that the northern kingdom would be destroyed and the people taken into exile (7:11, 17): "*Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the stall . . . Therefore, they shall now be the first to go into exile, and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away*" (6:4, 7). A few years after Amos spoke, it happened just as God had said. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom and took thousands into captivity. Because of their mistreatment of the poor, God destroyed the northern kingdom—forever. In a little over a century, God would destroy Jerusalem by a foreign power for the same evil—Mammonism/Secularism/Babylonism. The same fate awaits future wealthy Babylon, which is also guilty of social injustice of putting money, profit, and wealth over human beings (Rev. 18:10-20)!

**Revelation 18:10** `Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.' <sup>11</sup> "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: <sup>12</sup> "merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; <sup>13</sup> "and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. <sup>14</sup> "The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. <sup>15</sup> "The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, <sup>16</sup> "and saying, `Alas, alas, that great city that was

clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! <sup>17</sup> `For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance <sup>18</sup> "and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, `What *is* like this great city?' <sup>19</sup> "They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, `Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.' <sup>20</sup> "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and *you* holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"

In His Matchless Grace,

Pastor Don