

**SOCIAL JUSTICE IS A GOD ISSUE (Not a liberal issue)**  
**AMOS: SOCIAL JUSTICE, THE POOR, AND ALL NATIONS**

Social justice is not just a biblical issue, it is a universal and humanitarian issue before the LORD for all nations.

A common objection against using principles of social justice found in the Bible for American policy for the poor is the retort "America is not a theocracy." Agreed! I am the last one to want anything resembling a theocracy for our country.

I am also against "social justice" as embodied in godless, communistic liberation movements (e.g., South America). It is worth remembering, however, that social justice as such predates these movements and it a central truth of Natural Law-- which is objective, universal, and never changing.

It is worth pointing out that many of those who reject the use of Old Testament social justice for modern America are only too willing to use the Old Testament for private property rights, the death penalty, and a host of other rights and obligations. Does that mean that they are for a theocracy? Of course not!

One way to demonstrate that social justice is not just for the theocratic nation of Israel is to look at the book of Amos. Amos is filled with references to God's judgment on Gentile nations surrounding Israel for social injustice and the poor-- the rich exploiting and neglecting the poor.

It is only after a series of warnings of divine judgment for social injustice against the poor that God (through Amos who is from the southern kingdom of Judah) turns to Israel and promises judgment for social injustice against the poor:

Note a few references to Israel and pagan nations about social injustice against the poor in Amos:

1. The rich "sell the poor for a pair of sandals," and they have "trampled the head of the poor into the dust of the earth,"

*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. 7 They trampled the head of the poor into the the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, And pervert the way of the humble.*

2. The rich of Bashan "oppress the poor and who crush the needy,"

*Amos 4:1 Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, Who oppress the poor, Who crush the needy, Who say to your husbands, "Bring wine, let us drink!"*

3. The rich tread down the poor by imposing heavy rent so the rich can live in lavish homes, and they bribe the judges to deny justice to the poor,

*Amos 5:11 Therefore, because you tread down the poor And take grain taxes from him, Though you have built houses of hewn stone, Yet you shall not dwell in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, But you shall not drink wine from them. 12 For I know your manifold transgressions And your mighty sins: Afflicting the just and taking bribes; Diverting the poor from justice at the gate.*

Archaeologists have found that houses as late as the tenth century BC were all approximately the same size. But by Amos' 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.

In sum, we should not do away with the term "social justice" (or "love") because liberals tend to emphasize them. Instead, we should agree with the liberals that justice and love are critical and then proceed to fill them with correct content: i.e., the whole truth, total truth.

Let us not forget that God, true to His Word, did destroy Israel for the twin sins of idolatry and social injustice by means of Assyria in 721 B.C. Let us not forget the lesson that idolatry, especially of mammon, will always lead to social injustice as man places more value on money than human beings. Let us not forget that we are headed to Babylon, which is characterized by the commodification of even human beings:

“And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more; <sup>12</sup> cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every *kind of* citron wood and every article of ivory and every article *made* from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, <sup>13</sup> and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and *cargoes* of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives,” Revelation 18:11-13

May God give us the strength to stand for the whole truth, total truth--rather than reacting and thus being manipulated by our socio-politico-economic age to the point that we develop an allergy to talking about and developing foundational truths of love and justice.

God's punishment of the nations  
(as identified by Amos)

