



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Celebrating Freedom (Amos 2:4-16)

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Capitol Commission state directors are missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction

Seven is often used symbolically in Scripture to convey completeness or perfection. The extent of God's judgment against six nations is mentioned in the first section of Amos' prophecy (1:3—2:3). Imagine the astonishment of Israel to be the seventh and final nation to receive God's indictment. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was indicted for disregarding God's law (2:4-5) and the Northern Kingdom of Israel for its injustice (2:6-16).

A POSTURE FOR BLESSING

(2:4-5) First Peter 4:17 reads, "For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will* be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God." God's judgment against the six nations (1:3—2:3) was a prelude for His indictment against His own people.

The Southern Kingdom was mentioned first, whose capital was Jerusalem from which God "utters His voice" (1:2). The other nations would be judged on the basis of God's law "written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them" (Rom 2:15). The law upon the heart may be regarded as "natural revelation," and was codified through international laws and national treaties. The natural law served as the basis for God's judgment of the nations.

In his *Abolition of Man* (1955), C. S. Lewis defended the objectivity of values such as beauty and goodness against the modern view that such qualities are merely individualistic. Lewis wrote, "Until quite modern times all teachers and even all men believed the universe to be such that certain emotional reactions on our part could be either congruous or incongruous to it—believed, in fact, that objects did not merely receive, but could *merit*, our approval or disapproval, our reverence, or our contempt."¹ The objectivity of values means that one person may be correct and another wrong. For example, if someone regards a sunset as beautiful and another does not, then only person is correct. The same is true for the goodness and badness of actions, as opposed to these values being matters of opinion. Lewis argued that the universal acknowledgement of values and virtues is based upon natural revelation, as structured by the Creator (he called this the *Tao*). "The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary colour, or indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in."²

Rejection of the *Tao* is disaster for humanity because then values such as dignity and freedom become meaningless. When human beings are regarded merely as parts of nature, then both can be conquered through technology. However, when technology has no limitations it becomes totalitarian, or technocratic. Human beings are held in the control of an elite "inner ring" as technocracy advances, who determine plans for future generations with the present generation disconnected from the past. Lewis argued that natural law, or objective

morality, is essential to the wellbeing of humanity. He was increasingly concerned that modern society is without “chests” (i.e. the higher emotions that are absolutely essential to harmonize the cerebral and the sensual), which would lead eventually to the abolition of man. Humanity “without chests” is the worship of one’s own mind and passions (a moral relativism that destroys the chest and removes morality).

**GOD WILL NOT BLESS OUR NATION UNLESS ITS CITIZENS
ARE IN A POSTURE TO BE BLESSED.**

Although the natural law is universal, God’s people possessed the revealed law of God, which they promised to obey (Exod 19—20). Therefore, their disobedience would entail a more severe punishment than the other nations. The history of the Southern Kingdom was persistent disobedience to “have no other gods before” the God of Israel (Deut 5:7; cf. Gen 31:53-54; Deut 6:4-9; Josh 24:2, 14-17). Judah believed God would protect them indefinitely in spite of their rejection of God’s law and by following gods who are themselves lies. Having being allied with false gods (cf. Deut 32:13-18; Hos 2:4-5; 1 Cor 10:20), God’s judgment was inevitable. America cannot fail to heed the lesson of Amos 2:4-5. God will not bless our nation unless its citizens are in a posture to be blessed. God’s blessing is dependent upon obeying His Word, and confessing disobedience against it (cf. Neh 9:1-38). God will bless America if certain conditions are satisfied. However, before we are concerned for the nation, we must first examine ourselves in light of God’s Word.

OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT LAW

Although it is a matter of didactic convenience to designate the Old Testament commandments as ceremonial, legal, and moral, such classifications are not found in Scripture. The rabbis counted 613 commandments in the Old Testament, which were all binding upon Israel. Therefore, the argument of James 2:10 is with regard to *the* Law. The Law is a unit, and if one law was broken, then all 613 would have been violated. The church lives by the Law of Christ, or the Law of the Spirit of Life (cf., for instance, 2 Cor 3 where the Ten Commandments especially are designated as a ministration of condemnation and death). Many of the commandments of the Law of Christ are the same as the Old Testament (Mosaic) Law, but many are different (e.g. no Sabbath or dietary laws). Although there are many similarities between the Mosaic Law and the Law of Christ, it is the New Covenant that forms the basis for the Law of Christ.

A POSTURE FOR FREEDOM

(2:6-16) The indictment against the Northern Kingdom of Israel is the only instance where four sins are actually mentioned (2:6-8). They made money by selling the righteous and needy, thereby violating social justice to such a degree that the poor were trampled into the dust of the earth. They were sexually immoral in blatant opposition to God’s law. Israel was to represent the holy God to the world by being holy (Lev 19:2), but was indulging in the profane upon the cloaks of the poor. They did not return pledges for a debt (Exod 22:14-17; Deut 24:17). Israel drank the wine acquired by fines and as an accompaniment to their immorality (cf. Exod 24:11; Numb 25:1-2; Deut 12:17-18; Judg 9:27).

Israel forgot what God accomplished on their behalf (2:9-11). God “raised up” prophets to declare His Word, and Nazirites to be examples to the people. God’s provision, however, was meaningless because the people did not desire holiness and refused to let the faithful remain obedient (2:12). As opposed to adopting a posture for blessing, God’s people “weighed down” the Lord with their sin (2:13).

The indictment is not only moral and religious, but also contains a note of political insight with regard to lost opportunity. “All of life, to Amos, presents itself as a unity. Morality and religion are intimately associated with society and politics. It is not even possible to describe this in ‘cause-and-effect’ relations. It is much more intimately related than that. It is part of a realm of being for Israel [and all nations], in history and under God.”³ No human effort would be able to avert the judgment. Amos 1:3—2:16 serves to remind us that any nation that rejects human decency and justice will experience God’s judgment, and it is even more certain for God’s own people if they reject His Word and forgot His provisions.

Freedom is a wonderful experience. America cannot survive without freedom, which is why Lady Liberty’s torch burns brightly. Of course, the light of freedom has to reach all 50 states not just New York, and has to reach every American heart for the truth to remain that the United States is the land of the free and the home of the brave. Freedom is indeed precious. Americans are free to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. God has inherent freedom. Israel delighted when He exercised that control and discipline over the nations, but thought they were exempt from His freedom. God will judge all nations and individuals who are not faithful to Him. Freedom is something to celebrate but it cannot truly function and continue without biblical faith and morality.

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (1943; reprint, New York: Collier Books, 1955) 25.

² *Ibid.* 56-57.

³ John D. W. Watts, *Studying the Book of Amos* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966) 39.