

God's Law and God's Gospel

God's Law and Gospel both radiate from His love for His creation and His special love for His human creatures. You can see in Amos how His special love for all humans causes Him anger when He sees one group of humans mistreating another. It is because of that love that He speaks both Law and Gospel into the heart of Israel.

Law and Gospel are the two sides of God's love for us. Unfortunately, we are damaged and maimed by sin and cannot see God's law as "good for us" because it isn't. God's law always spells out our doom because we cannot keep it. Yet, we recognize its goodness found in the Law and seek to embrace its wisdom and its love.

Do you feel like you understand Law and Gospel as it is presented in Amos? In Christianity in general?

Homework for Next Time:

- Next time we will have another "Stump the Pastor" contest, so bring your questions.

Next Bible Study (5 weeks)

For our next Bible Study, I figured a topical study (as opposed to going through a book of the Bible) might be interesting. Please vote on the following options:

- **Practicing Christian Hospitality**
 - Looking at both historic and modern examples of Christian hospitality and how we can arrive at our own practices of hospitality.
- **Big Names in Christianity**
 - Learning who is behind those "big names" like St. Augustine, John Calvin, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and so forth.
- **The "Top 5" Distinctive Things About Lutheran Theology**
 - Pretty self explanatory
- **Your suggestion**



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University Lutheran Presents:



God's Prophet to Israel Chapters 6-9

Finally, some Gospel...

After all of the heavy, heavy law contained in the book of Amos, this book of prophecy turns to the Gospel. God relents from His divine anger and gives the people of Israel yet another promise of restoration through His grace.

The polarity between Law and Gospel is something that has been discussed at great lengths in the church. The term was originally discussed by Martin Luther, but since then dispensationalists (those who believe in things like the rapture), Calvinists (followers of John Calvin, like Presbyterians and the Reformed Church of America), and others have their own views on the polarity of Law and Gospel.

Questions that come up in discussions about Law and Gospel are usually about the intensity and quantity of "Law versus Gospel". While the distinction of Law and Gospel is important to keep in mind, it is equally important to not divorce the Law from the Gospel or the Gospel from the Law. God has given us His Law, it is good, but we are too weak to receive its goodness. Because of our weakness, the Gospel gives us the gifts that the Law should give.

As you read through Amos, if you were going to divide the book into Law versus Gospel, how much would be Law and how much would be Gospel?

Your homework:

You were supposed to read Chapters 7-9. What did you feel the purpose of God's judgment against Israel was in this case? Does this fit with what you usually assume to be the purpose of God's law today?

The First Relenting and a Warning (7:1-9)

Amos receives two visions from God which seem to be warnings or tests, one involving locusts and another involving fire. After God shows Amos each of these visions, Amos cries out on behalf of Israel and God relents His judgment. The last vision is a pictorial view of God judging the "straightness" of Israel against the "plumb line" of His law.

Just as in the case of Abraham pleading for his nephew Lot (Genesis 18), God seems to relent and relent, but then the evil is still too great for God to ignore. What other Biblical examples of God's relenting can you think of?

Amos Accused by Amaziah (7:10-17)

Amaziah was the priest of Bethel. Bethel was the Northern Kingdom's (Israel's) religious capital city. However the king mentioned here, Jeroboam, had turned the city into the lead city of Baal worship through golden calves during his reign. Amaziah attacks Amos by basically accusing him of prophesying as a source of economic wealth. Amos retorts that he had a job that would have probably paid more than any prophet's wages.

This prose section in the middle of a poetic work seems to have been typical for the 8th Century prophets. Isaiah, Amos' contemporary also incorporates a prose section in the middle of his book. What do you think adding this prose section does for the book's message? Does it heighten something? Explain something? Etc.

Time's Up – the Summer Fruit (8:1-6)

The image of a summer fruit basket would have been understood as something like our phrase "passing the Rubicon". After the summer fruit had been picked, there was no more opportunity for growth. You were left with what you had. Like the grasshopper in the Aesop fable of the Ant and the Grasshopper, there is no turning the clock back, what's done is done.

God promises that there will be such a day for us. His Law's purpose is to keep us from being like these unrighteous people of the Northern kingdom to who sell the poor in exchange for sandals and silver. How does God's law inform what we are supposed to be doing in our lives today?

The Prophetic Vision of Doom (8:7-14)

God gives Amos His oath with a vision of the coming days. He begins with a hint of what He perhaps wants most, for His people to remember His rescue and through remembering it be kind to others. The vision of doom ends in His Word being taken from them (vs. 11).

This vision of doom seems to foretell an event that happens long after Amos' death (see vs. 9-10). Jesus' death is the final sacrifice not only for our sins, but even for these sins of the Northern Kingdom. What parts of this prophecy remind you of the passion story from Jesus' life?

No Escape (9:1-4)

God declares that there will be no escape from His wrath. Read this aloud and try to imagine the scenes that God is painting.

I've heard many people who seem to have this image of being able to negotiate with God on the last days. How do you suppose they will try to eek out of judgment. What sorts of excuses would you use if you were trying to escape God?

Above All the Nations (9:5-10)

God assures the people of Israel once again that they have not seen anything like His wrath. Again, He invokes the images of the nations that He has delivered Israel from – Egypt, Philistia, etc. He assures the people of Israel that everyone will be overtaken who has sinned and that none will escape, not even those currently planning to escape or those who have escaped before.

Have you ever "escaped" with a sin? Did it make it easier to commit that sin again once you had gotten away with it once? Is there something terrifying in knowing that no sin escapes the eye of God's judgment?

The Gospel...finally...

Finally, we hear God speak His Gospel into the lives of those in Israel. He begins to talk about restoration. But wait...He just got done talking about how none will be left, how is He going to "raise up" that which is...dead? (Get it?)

God's Gospel for the Northern Kingdom of Israel is not a different Gospel than the Gospel that we know. Israel's sins and our sins are both covered in the sacrifice of Christ, received by us personally by faith in God's action. What do you suppose happens to people who died before Christ came to the earth in approx. 3 AD?

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