

Amos 2:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

Analysis

But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem—The oracle against Judah uses the identical judgment formula applied to pagan nations (Gaza, Tyre, Teman, Moab), shocking the Israelite audience. Amos's listeners likely applauded condemnation of traditional enemies but were stunned when God's impartial justice turned toward His own covenant people. The mention of Jerusalem's palaces makes this unmistakably clear—even the holy city faces destruction if covenant unfaithfulness persists.

Judah's specific sin (v. 4) was "they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked." The Hebrew *ma'asam et-torat YHWH* (מְאָסָם אֶת-תּוֹרָת) "their despising the law of Yahweh") and *lo shamru* (לֹא שָׁמַרְוּ, "they have not kept") indicate deliberate rejection, not mere failure. *Khazzeveyhem* (קְזַבֵּיָהֶם, "their lies/false gods") likely refers to idolatry—the same false gods their ancestors followed.

Judah's sin differs from surrounding nations: while pagans violated universal moral law (slave trafficking, desecrating corpses, violence), Judah violated revealed covenant law. They had Torah, prophets, temple worship, and Davidic kingship—every advantage. Yet they "despised" God's law, preferring ancestral idolatry. This makes their guilt greater, fulfilling the principle of Amos 3:2: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Greater revelation brings greater accountability. The prophecy was

fulfilled when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC, burning the city and temple exactly as Amos predicted.

Historical Context

Amos prophesied around 760 BC to northern Israel but included this oracle against Judah, the southern kingdom. At this time, Judah under Uzziah enjoyed relative prosperity and stability (2 Chronicles 26), similar to Israel's golden age under Jeroboam II. But spiritual decline accompanied material success—idolatry persisted, social injustice grew, and covenant faithfulness waned.

The fulfillment came 174 years later when Babylonian armies besieged Jerusalem (588-586 BC), breached the walls, burned the city and temple, and exiled the population (2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36:15-21). Jeremiah witnessed this judgment, repeatedly warning Judah to repent. The precision of Amos's prophecy—fire devouring Jerusalem's palaces—was literally fulfilled as Babylonian forces systematically burned the city (2 Kings 25:9).

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God's willingness to judge His own covenant people Judah by the same standard as pagan nations demonstrate His impartial justice?
2. In what ways do Christians today risk "despising" God's revealed Word by preferring traditions, cultural Christianity, or selective obedience over full submission to Scripture?

Interlinear Text

ירושלים: ארמן ות **וְשָׁלַח** חֲטָאת
But I will send a fire upon Judah and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem
H7971 H784 H3063 H398 H759 H3389

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 17:27 (References Jerusalem): But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

Hosea 8:14 (Parallel theme): For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

Jeremiah 21:10 (Parallel theme): For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

Jeremiah 39:8 (References Jerusalem): And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 52:13 (References Jerusalem): And burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burned he with fire: