

The following “Witnessing Christ from the Old Testament” study covers the books of Obadiah and Amos.

[You can find the LDS outline of the study and resources here.](#)

LDS Study Focus

God chose Abraham’s seed to be His covenant people so that they would “be a blessing” to all people (see Genesis 12:2–3). But instead, by the time of Amos’s ministry, many of the covenant people were oppressing the poor and ignoring the prophets, making their acts of worship empty and meaningless (see Amos 2:6–16). True, the nations surrounding them were also guilty of great sins (see Amos 1; 2:1–5), but that has never been an excuse for God’s people (see Amos 3:2). So God sent a herdsman from Judah named Amos to preach repentance to the Kingdom of Israel. Later, God also declared through the Prophet Obadiah that although the Kingdom of Judah had been destroyed, the Lord would gather and bless His people again. The covenant people had strayed from the Lord, both prophets testified, but they would not be cast off forever. When God reveals His secrets to His servants the prophets (see Amos 3:7), we can take it as a sign that He still wants to help us live up to the covenants we made with Him.

The Life and Times of Amos

The Prophet Amos was originally a shepherd from the village of Tekoa, located 10 miles south of Jerusalem. Around 760 B.C., God called Amos north to prophesy against Samaria and Israel. Unfortunately, his actual time of service appears to be short because of the anger and opposition he quickly created with his unpopular message.

Amos served and wrote his book during the reigns of King Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel. Unlike the times of many other prophets, these were days of great prosperity and peace for the two kingdoms, especially in Samaria, which flourished. However, although the wealthy grew wealthier, the hard-working farmers and working class were devastated by years of struggle and toil from war and discord. Many had to take out loans and, unable to repay them, were preyed upon by their debtors, who enslaved them and took control of their lands. In turn, the wealthy and elite prided themselves in their prosperity and saw themselves as unbeatable in war and wealth.

Summary of Amos

Although the message of Amos is primarily one of judgment and rebuke, it also reveals the sovereignty of God as he remains involved with his people throughout history.

Like Obadiah, Amos speaks of “the day of the Lord,” on which God would judge the people of his place and time. However, this message also reminds the modern reader of the great Day of the Lord that will occur when Christ returns.

Hosea and Amos were contemporary prophets who spoke similar messages. However, while “Hosea examines Israel’s failure to uphold the worship and ritual reverence for God, Amos focuses on the moral decay and social injustice that represents the other half of the covenant-failure coin. Amos, like Hosea, accuses Israel of idolatry, but the main burden of his accusation is about the results of social injustice connected to their idolatry” ([The Bible Project Hosea/Amos](#)).

Much of Amos' warning concerned the complicated relationship between wealth and religion. Although the people went through the motions of sacrifice and rituals in the temple, their hearts and minds were far from God. They were more concerned about gaining more physical wealth than the true treasure God had to offer them through his forgiveness and the salvation to which the sacrifices pointed them.

Amos' writings began with a judgment on the neighboring nations (**Amos 1**), followed by judgment on Judah and Israel for their rejection of the Lord and his word (**Amos 2**). Through Amos, God then provided reasons for punishing Israel (**Amos 3**) and spoke against their social and spiritual corruption while urging them to prepare to meet the LORD (**Amos 4**). Finally, after his rebuke, he expressed a lamentation for Israel in which he encouraged the people to seek the Lord and live (**Amos 5**) before once again calling out the Israelites for their complacency and pride (**Amos 6**). The final three chapters (**Amos 7–9**) include a series of visions: locusts, fire, a plumb line, a basket of summer fruit, and the Lord beside the altar. Additionally, the closing chapters recount Amos' opposition from the kings and leaders of the people and ultimately close with an announcement of judgment and restoration.

More than any other book of the Bible, Amos holds God's people accountable for their ill-treatment of and injustice towards others.

[Amos] repeatedly points out the failure of the people to fully embrace God's idea of justice. They were selling off needy people for goods, taking advantage of the helpless, oppressing the poor, and the men were using women immorally (**Amos 2:6–8; 3:10; 4:1; 5:11–12; 8:4–6**). Drunk on their own economic success and intent on strengthening their financial position, the people had lost the concept of caring for one another; Amos rebuked them because he saw in that lifestyle evidence that Israel had forgotten God ([Overview of Amos, Insight.org](#)).

Conversation Starters

- How does the Book of Amos highlight the sovereignty of God?
- Although God's sovereignty can sometimes be terrifying, why is it comforting?
- What does justice look like in God's equation?
- How is God's justice different from our human ideas of justice?
- Are you prepared to meet God? (See **Amos 4:1–13**) What adequately prepares someone to meet God?
- In what ways is your life out of line with what God demands in his word?
- In what ways are you trying to line yourself up with God, to justify yourself, that might instead be distancing you from him? (See **Amos 7**)

Sharing Personally

Amos 4:12

In his book Long for This World, Jonathan Weiner writes about science's promise to radically extend how long we live, predicting that molecular biology will cure aging so that lifespan may reach 1000 years.

But what difference does it make if, after 1,000 years, we will eventually die anyway? The prediction only postpones facing the ultimate question of what happens when we die. It does not answer it.

The Bible tells us that death is not the end of our existence. Instead, everyone will one day stand before the Judge.

*All of us are sinners and in need of forgiveness. Only Jesus' death on the cross has provided forgiveness and eternal life for all who believe (**Romans 3:23; 6:23**). Additionally, the Bible says, "**people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment**" (**Hebrews 9:27**).*

Our appointed face-to-face encounter with God puts everything in perspective.

*So, whether we live 80, 90, or even 1,000 years, the issue of eternity is the same: the Prophet Amos admonished the people in his day: "**Prepare to meet your God**" (**Amos 4:12**).*

*What matters more than length of life
Is where you'll spend eternity;
If you have placed your faith in Christ,
Then heaven's glory you will see. —Sper*

Only those who have placed their faith in Christ are prepared to meet their Maker.

Amos 4:13

*Looking at the world around us makes us marvel at how amazing our God is. The Bible says this: "**He who forms the mountains, who creates the wind, and who reveals his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth—the Lord God Almighty is his name**" (**Amos 4:13**).*

Mountains. Rushing winds. Cool breezes. Sunsets. Endless blue sky. Isn't God amazing? The Lord God Almighty is his name!

And he knows your name too. That's even more amazing. That same Almighty God made you too. He loves you. He sent his Son Jesus to die for you and save you from your sins. He's made an even more fantastic place for you and all believers in Jesus in heaven. So, when you get outside, remember that the God who made the mountains, controls the wind, and turns darkness into light, is the Lord God Almighty.

Amos 7:8

In Amos 7:8, “The LORD said, ‘Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people.’” A plumb line is a string with a weight at the bottom, used by builders to ensure walls are vertically straight, lined up straight, or justified correctly, like words on a page. If God set a plumb line among us, how well would our spiritual lives line up?

Our lives do not align with God’s standards; instead, we are off-plumb and out of line because we have defied God and his commands and prided ourselves in our attempts to build life and eternity for ourselves based on our efforts.

The cross of Christ invites us to confess our sins of rebellion and pride and, through Christ’s atonement to be justified, brought into correct alignment with God through the perfect work of Christ for us.

The Life and Times of Obadiah

Other than his name, very little is known about the Prophet Obadiah. His name, “servant of the Lord,” is the same name given to twelve other people in the Old Testament. Moreover, historians and commentators don’t know precisely where in Israel’s timeline to place Obadiah, with a range of the ninth to the fifth century B.C.

What is known is that Obadiah was called to speak a message of judgment—a war oracle—against the neighboring distant relative Edomites. They stood by and watched as foreigners invaded Jerusalem. Like many other prophets, Obadiah spoke against the enemy nations around him and foretold their destruction. However, what makes his message more unique is that, like Jonah and Nahum, he prophesied only against an enemy, not his people.

Summary of Obadiah

In short, the single chapter of Obadiah, making it the most concise book in the Old Testament, contains a judgment against Edom because of its arrogance in thinking that they would be immune to God’s judgment (**Obadiah 1–9**), a judgment against specific sins prevalent among the Edomites including their lust for wealth and possessions and lack of brotherly commitment (**Obadiah 10–14**), a judgment against the nations around Edom that would include Edom, and an announcement of future blessing for Israel despite their apparent demise and impoverished state.

Pastor [Paul Tripp provides a Christ-centered summary](#) of Obadiah’s judgment-heavy message.

Like other prophets, Obadiah is a finger-pointing down the years from Abraham to Jesus, to you and me, the unshakable chain of the blessings of God. He will not forsake those upon whom He has placed His favor, and He will continue to promote His redemptive plan till that plan is complete. When you read Obadiah, you should hear echoing in the background the words of Christ, “It is finished!” God will complete His plan. He will do what’s necessary. He will bless His people.

Opportunities for Witnessing

The only verse in Obadiah that the LDS resources cover is **Obadiah 1:21**, which has been open to interpretation as to what it means and who the “saviors on mount Zion” are. The commentary might provide some good food for thought and a conversation starter.

President Gordon B. Hinckley gave one possible interpretation of the phrase “saviours on mount Zion,” connecting the phrase to temple and family history work: “[In the temple] we literally become saviors on Mount Zion. What does this mean? Just as our Redeemer gave His life as a vicarious sacrifice for all men, and in so doing became our Savior, even so we, in a small measure, when we engage in proxy work in the temple, become as saviors to those on the other side who have no means of advancing unless something is done in their behalf by those on earth” (“[Closing Remarks](#),” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 105).

What could it mean to be “saviours ... on mount Zion”? Which of our ancestors need saving ordinances? What will we do to help them?

Pastor C.W. Spaude shares a much more biblical explanation in [The People’s Bible: Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah](#) from Northwestern Publishing House.

The word “deliverers” is also used for the judges, like Deborah, Gideon, and Samson. They carried out God’s judgment by delivering Israel from the oppression of her enemies. The deliverers Obadiah has in mind are those who bring deliverance from the slavery of sin and the power of the devil. He is referring to the messengers of the gospel, who by their preaching and witnessing are to be

a light for the Gentiles,
to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who
sit in darkness. (**Isaiah 42:6, 7**)

These gospel messengers will go “on”—or, as the NIV footnote reads, “from”—Mount Zion, the New Testament church. They will go “to govern the mountains of Esau,” that is, to lead the descendants of Esau, the Edomites, out of the oppression of their sin into the glorious salvation to be found in the Savior Jesus Christ.

All unbelievers are Edomites, spiritual Edomites, who by their sinful pride and unbelief have opposed the will of God and despised his people. Yet, God loves them and gave his Son into death for their sins, as well as for the sins of others. He does not want “anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (**2 Peter 3:9**). We who belong to the spiritual house of Jacob have a job to do, an exciting job and a privilege. God calls upon us to bring the gospel to the unbelievers, to show them the way to their Savior, Jesus Christ.

“And the kingdom will be the Lord’s.” The Lord rules by his gospel in the hearts and lives of all believers. On the last great day of the Lord, he will rule with all his redeemed in

the eternity of heaven. Then the gracious restoration of God's people will be complete. (C. W. Spaude, [Obadiah, Jonah, Micah](#), p. 27–28)

Conversation Starters

- How do people today act in pride like the Edomites in the Book of Obadiah? Why are we equally deserving of God's judgment?
- What kind of "deliverers" or "saviors" does God send out from Mount Zion today? How are these "saviors" different from and unique from *the* Savior? What is their "salvation work," and how is it different from that of Jesus?
- How does God's judgment of Edom demonstrate how God will complete his plans? Why is this, in a strange way, comforting? (Hint: God will do what he says he will).
- Obadiah is the first of the writing prophets to use the term "the day of the LORD," which occurs more than 140 times in the Old Testament. It refers to a time when the Lord carries out his will in judgment and redemption. What thoughts come to mind as you think about the "day of the LORD"?