



Dr. Samson Uytanlet

## Two Leg Bones and a Piece of an Ear

Throughout the history of Israel (Northern Kingdom), from the day it was established after Jeroboam I led them against Rehoboam until the day they were destroyed by the Assyrians, there has been occasional revivals (e.g., Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal), but in general, Israel had been an idolatrous nation since they separated from Judah. This is one of the reasons the prophet Amos and the others were sent to them.

Although Amos did not just write about the sins of Israel, as we can read in the first two chapters of Amos; he also addressed the sins of the Syrians, the Philistines, the Moabites, and even the people of Judah, but much of his prophecies were about the Northern Kingdom. He talks about how some people were being sold for money (2:5), how a father and son share the same girl (2:6), and how the prophets were prohibited from prophesying (2:12). The prophet Amos had to deal with issues such as slavery, licentiousness, and religious intolerance — very much like the issues we are facing today!

When Amos talks about these sins, he also talks about God's judgment (3:1–2). What is clear is that the LORD had already made up his mind to bring dis-

aster to the nation, and that judgment is sure to come. And if what is happening around us is very much the same as what the prophet had spoken against, in the same way that these ancient people were judged for their sins, the same can be said about our generation. In fact, the New Testament made it clear that a day of final reckoning will come, and we just don't know when.

What is noteworthy about the prophets as God's mouthpieces is that they not only reveal God's judgment, but they also bring the message of hope.

*"This is what the Lord says: 'As a shepherd rescues from the lion's mouth only **two leg bones or a piece of an ear**, so will the Israelites living in Samaria be rescued, with only the **head of a bed and a piece of fabric from a couch.**'"* (Amos 3:12)

This hint of hope reveals God's desire to seek and save the lost! The images Amos used (two leg bones and a piece of an ear, together with the piece of cloth from the fabric) reveal so much about God's desire to save his people and his heart that was broken in the process. This also tells us about his desire to save the people in our generation—a desire expressed through the images of the two leg bones and a piece of an ear!

### 1. The two leg bones and an ear are images of a grieving shepherd.

Two leg bones and an ear is better than none; but it is better to have the whole, isn't it? God is the shepherd who wanted to save the whole sheep. Just imagine the kind of grief that a shepherd would feel to see his own sheep being devoured by a lion, and as he tried to save it, he could not save the whole but only two leg bones or a piece of an ear—just a few remnants. For sure, God is not powerless to save the whole sheep, but as the prophet Amos made clear, the sheep was being devoured by the lion, not because the shepherd was indifferent or inept, but because of the sins—"for three transgressions and for four" — of Israel.

### 2. Two leg bones and one ear are images of a compassionate shepherd.

Two leg bones and a piece of an ear are not the choice parts of a lamb. Even if the shepherd is able to save these parts, there is not much he can do with them. There is not enough meat to fill the shepherd's stomach. These parts, to put it negatively, are insignificant compared to other parts. Two leg bones and a piece of an ear—these are images of a compassionate shepherd, his salvation extends to those that are considered insignificant. This is exactly



what the Jesus did while he was on earth—to reach out to tax collectors, to “sinners,” to prostitutes, to the Samaritan woman, to the leper, to the blind,

to the children.

### 3. Two leg bones and a piece of an ear are images of urgency.

Lions do not really eat the bones of their prey, but the way Amos drew the picture was that his lion was able to devour everything. This suggests that if the shepherd delayed, the whole sheep will be eaten up and nothing will be left! This is an image of urgency. God did not fall short in warning his people about the consequences of their idolatry. Prophets were continuously sent; and

even at the brink of punishment, he offered hope of salvation.

### 4. Two leg bones and a piece of an ear are images of purpose.

Lions are not the type of animals that you cuddle and play with everyday; they are wild animals that are able to devour not just the sheep but also the shepherd. For the shepherd to save the sheep from the lion’s mouth is too risky; but it is the risk the shepherd is willing to take. Why? Because he has a sense of purpose! He wanted to save the sheep, even if it means putting himself in danger. A sense of purpose strengthens the tired worker, helps him to focus when there are so many distractions, and makes him take risks.

Two leg bones and an ear: these are images of a grieving shepherd who grieves for the lost, of a compassionate shepherd who cares for the insignificant

people, of the urgency of the task, and of a sense of purpose. These are valuable lessons if we think in terms of evangelism.



Like a grieving shepherd, we need to remember that not everyone will respond positively, but we continue to do evangelism. Like the compassionate shepherd, we are to reach out, not only to people who are like us, but also to people who are unlovable; not only to people who are considered “significant” based on worldly standards, remembering our own unworthiness. With a sense of urgency and purpose, we should not procrastinate but be willing to take risks to preach the Gospel, even if it is only for two leg bones or a piece of an ear.

2 0 1 4  B S O P  S U N D A Y S  神 學 主 日	日期	Date	教會 Church	講員 Speaker
	二月	Feb 09	描仁斗中華基督教會 United Evangelical Church of Balintawak	黃俊儒博士 Dr. Samson Uytanlet
	七月	July 20	菲律賓中華基督教會山堂 WSC Westminster Church	林毓麟教授 Prof. Allen Lim
	八月	Aug 10	宿務基督教會 Cebu Gospel Church	邵晨光博士 Dr. Joseph Shao
	八月	Aug 17	靈惠堂 Grace Gospel Church	邵晨光博士 Dr. Joseph Shao
	八月	Aug 24	菲律賓中華基督教會 United Evangelical Church of the Philippines 聖公會教會聖司提芬座堂 St. Stephen’s Parish	邵晨光博士 Dr. Joseph Shao 劉保成牧師 Rev. Anthony Hao
	八月	Aug 31	朗嗎倪地基督教會 Dumaguete Christian Church	劉保成牧師 Rev. Anthony Hao
	九月	Sept 07	巴西中華基督教會 United Evangelical Church of the Pasay	黃俊儒博士 Dr. Samson Uytanlet
	九月	Sept 14	榮耀基督教會 Glory Evangelical Church 南古島中華基督教會 United Evangelical Church of General Santos	邵晨光博士 Dr. Joseph Shao 余民利牧師 Rev. Dennis Yam
	九月	Sept 21	基督教銀禧堂 Jubilee Evangelical Church 伯大尼堂 Bethany Church	許書義牧師 Rev. Philip Co 邵晨光博士 Dr. Joseph Shao
	九月	Sept 28	菲律賓基督教禧年堂 New Millennium Evangelical Church	邵晨光博士 Dr. Joseph Shao
	十月	Oct 12	恩園浸信會 Caloocan Christian Baptist Church	許書義牧師 Rev. Philip Co
	十月	Oct 26	基利心基督教會 Gerizim Evangelical Church	黃俊儒博士 Dr. Samson Uytanlet
	十一月	Nov 02	基督團契教會 Christ Fellowship Church	許書義牧師 Rev. Philip Co
	十一月	Nov 23	鑽禧中華基督教會 Diamond Jubilee Evangelical Church	吳家順牧師 Rev. Wilson Go Kiao
	十一月	Nov 30	菲律賓靈惠基督教會 Grace Christian Church	劉保成牧師 Rev. Anthony Hao