

30 - Amos

Amos

Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO AMOS

Amos says of himself, "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel'" (7:14,15). He was from Tekoa in Judah, but he was called to speak God's word to Northern Israel. He prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, in about 760 BC, some 40 years before the Assyrian conquest of Samaria, capital of Israel. He was not a religious professional, but he spoke with authority because he spoke the word of God. The phrase "This is what the Lord says...", or its equivalent is repeated more than 20 times. Amos was a country man, but he had a world view. He speaks of God's universal judgment on all nations. God is the Sovereign Lord of all men and nations. Amos preached repentance. He lived in a time of crisis; but no one knew that it was a time of crisis. From a military and political point of view, Jeroboam II was a strong king. The wealthy people enjoyed false security and lived in luxury on wealth squeezed from the poor. Idolatry and injustice flourished. The nation was rushing downhill to destruction. Amos called for justice and righteousness. The key verse is 5:24.

(i) Judgment on the Gentiles--1:1-2:3; (ii) Judgment on Israel--2:4-16; (iii) Israel's guilt--3:1-6:14; (iv) Five visions-- 7:1-9:10; (v) Israel's restoration--9:11-15.

THE LORD ROARS FROM ZION

Amos 1:1-2:3

Key Verse: 1:2

1. A roar of warning (1:1-10)

The God of Israel, whose throne is in Jerusalem, is Sovereign Lord of all the earth. When he saw the wickedness of the Gentile nations, he roared like a lion ready to pounce on his prey. His roar is a warning of judgment. Damascus was the capital of Syria; Gaza, the capital of Philistia; and Tyre, a wealthy trading center in its own right. These were nations who had harassed Israel from early times. Hazael king of Aram, treated God's people so ruthlessly (2Ki 8:12). Philistia and Tyre engaged in slave trade with Edom. The Sovereign Lord would judge these crimes against humanity.

2. Judgment on Edom, Ammon, Moab (1:11-2:3)

Each of these nations had a blood tie with Israel. But they, too, had been enemies. God would punish them because of their inhumanity and lack of regard for their brothers, God's people, in Israel.

Prayer: Sovereign Lord, attune our nation's ears to hear your roar, and help us to repent.

One Word: The Lion roars from Zion

JUDGED BY A HIGHER STANDARD

Amos 2:4-16

Key Verse: 2:4b

1. They have rejected the law of the Lord (4-5)

God roars with anger at man's inhumanity to man in the Gentile world; but he judges his own people by a higher standard--his revealed word. The people of Judah did not obey God's word because they had been led astray by false gods. They would burn with the fire of God's wrath.

2. Forgotten grace (6-16)

The sins of northern Israel were even more flagrant. Injustice and blatant immorality were rampant (6b-8). The Lord had brought them out of Egypt and fed them in the desert. He had given them the land of the Amorites (Canaan). He had also given them prophets and spiritual leaders, but they would not let the prophets speak God's word, and they would not let the holy men keep their vows. The Lord would crush them as a loaded cart crushes whatever falls beneath its wheels. No one would escape God's wrath.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my sins. Help me to remember your grace with a thankful heart, and diligently obey your word.

One Word: Remember his grace; keep his word

THE PROPHET MUST SPEAK GOD'S WORD

Amos 3:1-15

Key Verse: 3:8

1. God will punish his chosen people (1-8)

Some things have a clear cause-effect relationship. Two people have a date because both agree to it; a bird is caught because a snare has been set. Disaster comes to a sinful city because the Lord sends it. God reveals his plan to his prophets. When the lion has roared who will not fear? God has spoken to his servant, so he must prophesy. God loves his people whom he chose of all the families of the earth, whom he redeemed from Egypt. He cares, so he will punish. Amos, God's servant, rebukes and warns them.

2. Samaria does not know how to do right (9-15)

The unrest in Samaria, capital of Israel, was caused by two things: Jeroboam I had made his own religion by putting a calf-idol in Bethel; this continued to poison the inner lives of the people (14). The wealthy people built expensive houses and enjoyed glamorous vacations--and oppressed the poor. Unless they repented, a powerful enemy would overrun them and leave only a small remnant, like an ear of an animal saved from the lion's mouth by a shepherd.

Prayer: Lord, teach my heart to fear you, so that I may not fear people; grant me a repentant heart.

One Word: The Lord's servant must speak

PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD

Amos 4:1-13

Key Verse: 4:12b

1. Cows of Baoshan, hear God's word! (1-5)

Proud, greedy and pleasure-loving women were responsible for the corruption of Israel. They oppressed the poor, crushed the needy and brow-beat their husbands. Unless they repented of their idol worship--especially of their worship of the idol Jeroboam had put in Bethel--they would be taken away as captives.

2. He who turns the dawn into darkness (6-13)

The Lord is the Creator of mountains and wind. He knows the thoughts of all people. He gave his people empty stomachs so that they might repent and return to him. He sent plagues; he withheld rain; he sent locusts; he snatched a remnant of his people from the fire. He did these things so that they would repent and return to him. They did not repent, so the prophet's word to them is: "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel" (12b).

Prayer: Lord, raise up prayerful women who love God and care about the poor and needy, and respect their husbands. Turn the hearts of our people to God. Bring a spirit of repentance to our nation.

One Word: Prepare to meet your God

SEEK THE LORD AND LIVE

Amos 5:1-27

Key Verse: 5:6a,14

1. Seek good and not evil (1-17)

One who is cut off from God is dead. We must seek the living God and live. How can we seek God? First, we must give up our "security blankets," for they are false idols (Bethel, Gilgal, Beersheba were popular places of pilgrimage--but not God's appointed place of worship.); second, we must seek good and not evil. Even when justice is turned to bitterness, truth is despised, the rich squeeze the poor and build mansions for themselves, and prudent men keep silent, we must hate evil and love good. Then God will be with us. Perhaps he will have mercy on a remnant.

2. Let justice roll on like a river (18-27)

God does not want superficial religion. He wants real repentance. He wants us to seek him with all our hearts, and turn from evil. He wants justice to roll on like a river. The day of accounting will be a day of darkness for those who do not seek God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to seek you with all my heart; have mercy on our nation. Let justice roll on like a river.

One Word: Seek the Lord and live

WOE TO THE COMPLACENT AND PROUD

Amos 6:1-14

Key Verse: 6:1a

1. Your feasting and lounging will end (1-7)

In the time of prosperity, the people of both Israel and Judah became complacent. No one was concerned about the rampant immorality and injustice in the land. Instead, the people congratulated themselves on their successful conquests. They were lazy and self-indulgent; they lounged around eating rich food and strumming their harps.

2. The Lord abhors Israel's pride (8-14)

God abhors pride. In Israel, people were so proud that even if all but ten men in one family died, the remnant would not repent. And even one survivor would not turn to God. Justice and righteousness had once been the hallmarks of God's people, but they had turned justice into poison. They boasted about empty conquests as though they had overcome their enemies by their own strength. God would break their pride with the rod of Assyria (14).

Prayer: Lord, save our nation from complacency and empty pride. Lord, I repent of my own pride and complacency and that of my country.

One Word: Don't be proud and complacent

THE VISION OF A PLUMB LINE

Amos 7:1-17

Key Verse: 7:8

1. Three visions (1-9)

God showed Amos three visions of judgment on Israel. The locusts and the fire represent judgments so thorough that no one could survive; God relented when Amos prayed for mercy. The third vision was a plumb line. A wall built true to a plumb line is straight and strong. The moral and spiritual plumb line is God's word. Israel had deviated from God's word from the beginning: the first king put an idol in Bethel. So the whole nation was crooked. Unless they repented, God would destroy them.

2. Amos, go home! (10-17)

Amos was from Judah. God sent him to preach in Israel. When people can't see their own blind spots, God sends them missionaries from other countries. Amaziah was the priest of Bethel. He assumed that Amos, too, was working for money. But Amos was a "tentmaker." He went to Israel because God sent him. Threats could not silence him.

Prayer: Lord, measure us by your plumb line and give us repentant hearts.

One Word: The plumb line of God's word

A BASKET OF RIPE FRUIT

Amos 8:1-14

Key Verse: 8:11b,12

1. A time ripe for judgment (1-6)

Amos' next vision was of a basket of ripe fruit. The time was ripe for judgment. The people had become so eager to make money that they were impatient for worship services to end. Merchants had developed many methods of cheating the poor. Creditors were eager to foreclose and make debtors slaves. Materialism had become their religion and money their god.

2. A famine of God's word (7-14)

God's judgment would come in the form of an earthquake accompanied by an eclipse (8,9). (Compare Mt 27:45-54.) The most terrible consequence of materialism is the famine of God's word which it produces. Spiritually hungry people look for God's word and do not find it-- because they look in the wrong places. They should look in the Bible, not in idol's temples, or in psychologists' offices, or in empty ritual.

Prayer: Lord, open our ears to hear your word and help us to share it with hungry people.

One Word: Share spiritual bread

I WILL RESTORE DAVID'S TENT

Amos 9:1-15

Key Verse: 9:11,12

1. The eyes of the Lord on a sinful nation (1-10)

The Lord stands by the altar, announcing a judgment which no one can escape (1-6). God had showed his favor to Israel by delivering her from slavery in Egypt. He also blessed other nations. The eyes of the Sovereign Lord now look down on all the sinful kingdoms. He will destroy them from the face of the earth. The privilege of being God's people is not an excuse for sin. God will sift out sinners as pebbles are sifted out of wheat. But in the midst of judgment, God always leaves a holy remnant that is the hope of the world.

2. God will restore David's fallen tent (11-15)

God's promise to Israel began to be fulfilled when Jesus sent his apostles to the Gentile world with the gospel (Acts 15:13-18). The fulfillment will be completed when Jesus comes to restore creation order and establish God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Prayer: Lord, your will be done and your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

One Word: Jesus restores David's tent