

Amos

Minor Prophets – part 3

September 26, 2021

DAY 1: Historical background, Amos 1-2

1. Amos was not a prophet by trade or by education. He was a shepherd and fig tree farmer. He lived near the border of the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.
2. The northern kingdom was ruled by Jeroboam II. He was a successful military leader. Israel won big battles, acquired more land, and many of the people enjoyed their prosperity.
3. But, in the eyes of the prophet Jeroboam II was one of the worst kings of Israel! The people's wealth led them to spiritual and moral apathy, and to greater and greater selfishness. The proliferation of idols led the folks to a greater and greater backsliding away from God and into justifying their own greed and moral indifference.
4. Amos is a compilation of messages, visions, and poems that he spoke to give the people a sense of divine dissatisfaction of their living and the warning of impending judgment.
5. Amos can be divided into three sections:
 - Amos 1-2—A series of poems and messages to Israel and other nations
 - Amos 3-6—Messages in poetic form, to Israel and its leaders
 - Amos 7-9—A series of visions depicting coming judgment on Israel.

Amos 1-2

6. Amos speaks to Israel's surrounding nations: Tyre, Damascus, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Gaza. Israel is in the center of that circle of nations.

Amos 1:2 "The LORD roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up, and the top of Carmel withers."

7. The following is an example of Amos' message to one of the surrounding nations—Edom.

Amos 1:11 This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not relent. Because he pursued his brother with a sword and slaughtered the women of the land, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked, ¹² I will send fire on Teman that will consume the fortresses of Bozrah."

8. Amos also speaks to the people of Israel.

Amos 2:6 This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not relent. They sell the innocent for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. ⁷ They trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed. ⁸ They lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge. In the house of their god they drink wine taken as fines."

9. The well-to-do and the governmental leaders took advantage of the poor. They took bribes, did not ensure judicial fairness, did not give legal recourse, cheated in the marketplace, etc.

10. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Amos 3

Amos 3:1 Hear this word, people of Israel, the word the LORD has spoken against you—against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt: ² “You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.”

1. God reminds the nation that He had called them out of slavery. He had chosen them (Genesis 12, 15) out of all the families of the earth to be a special people who would display the value of walking with God. They failed miserably.

2. They failed to respond to preaching, teaching, and prophecy. Only judgment was left.

Amos 3:9 Proclaim to the fortresses of Ashdod and to the fortresses of Egypt: “Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria; see the great unrest within her and the oppression among her people.” ¹⁰ “They do not know how to do right,” declares the LORD, “who store up in their fortresses what they have plundered and looted.”

3. Here, God speaks to neighboring countries, pointing out the awful sin of the people of the northern kingdom. He is both inviting these nations to invade, while at the same time warning the northern kingdom of her perilous plight.

4. What human sins does God point out that has led to this calamity?

Amos 3:14 On the day I punish Israel for her sins, I will destroy the altars of Bethel; the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground. ¹⁵ I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished,” declares the LORD.

5. The northern kingdom had set up two temples in their territory. Their king had been afraid of losing people when they traveled south to Jerusalem where Solomon’s temple was located. God had commanded the king not to build temples in his land knowing that the people would pervert their religion into idolatry, which they did.

6. What occurred was a “religion” that “allowed” them to live however they wanted to without regard to God’s law and commandments. The long-term effect would be misery for people, the nation, and even the nation’s existence.

7. When Amos prophesies that God will destroy the altars of Bethel and that the horns of their altar will be cut off He is repudiating their religiosity as not just a sham but as wicked.

Amos 3:15 I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished,” declares the LORD.

8. The northern kingdom had taken their wealth and flaunted it, building great excesses like winter homes and summer homes adorned with ivory. Much of their wealth was built at the expense of the poor who were often cheated by exorbitant prices, exorbitant taxes, exorbitant interest rates on debts, and the lack of judicial process when those who could not afford lawyers lost cases in court.

9. The house of cards would come tumbling down, in such a way that the wealthy who had lorded it over the poor would come to live a life of poverty in exile.

10. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3 Amos 4 – “...yet you have not returned to me.”

1. Amos 4 is a chapter that illustrates the tenacious, stubborn refusal to submit to the God who made them and loved them. The road the people chose was a road of misery, loneliness, emptiness, futility and frustration. Dysfunction, anger, rage, and justification for virtually any sin was their path.

2. Because God loved them, He tried everything to turn the people and the nation around. Yet, no matter what He tried, no matter how severe the remedy, the hardness of the human heart would not break. Pride reigned. Watch how this chapter unfolds, and then how this chapter ends!

Amos 4:6 I gave you empty stomachs in every city and lack of bread in every town, yet you have not returned to me,” declares the LORD.

Amos 4:7 “I also withheld rain from you when the harvest was still three months away. I sent rain on one town, but withheld it from another. One field had rain; another had none and dried up. ⁸ People staggered from town to town for water but did not get enough to drink, yet you have not returned to me,” declares the LORD.

Amos 4:9 “Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards, destroying them with blight and mildew. Locusts devoured your fig and olive trees, yet you have not returned to me,” declares the LORD.

Amos 4:10 “I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt. I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, yet you have not returned to me,” declares the LORD.

Amos 4:11 “I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to me,” declares the LORD.

Amos 4:12 “Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel, and because I will do this to you, Israel, prepare to meet your God.”

3. What strikes you about the hardness of the people’s hearts?

4. Do you sense a similar hardness in your heart? How so?

5. What does it take to get you to “return to the Lord” and away from your sins?

6. The chapter ends with an “introduction.”

Amos 4:13 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.

7. It’s as if Amos says to the people, “You are so far away from God that introductions are in order. You may not know that God is God.

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: Amos 5-6

1. Amos 5 is a lament of the misery and devastation to come upon the people. They will be invaded. They gloriously send out their troops to defend the land but are annihilated, instead.

2. In the next section God points out how they have chosen to rebel and contrasts that with pleas to seek the Lord and goodness.

*Amos 5:4 This is what the LORD says to Israel: “**Seek me and live**;⁵ do not seek Bethel, do not go to Gilgal, do not journey to Beersheba. For Gilgal will surely go into exile, and Bethel will be reduced to nothing.”⁶ **Seek the LORD and live**, or he will sweep through the tribes of Joseph like a fire; it will devour them, and Bethel will have no one to quench it.*

Amos 5:7 There are those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground.

Amos 5:10 There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth.¹¹ You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain.

*Amos 5:14 **Seek good, not evil, that you may live.** Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is.¹⁵ Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.*

3. What strikes you about the examples of the people’s sin?

4. What strikes you about God’s plea to seek Him and live?

*Amos 5:21 “I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me.²² Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.²³ Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.²⁴ But let **justice** roll on like a river, **righteousness** like a never-failing stream!*

5. “Justice” – The Hebrew word is “Mishpat.” Justice actions one takes to correct injustice. It is to do all that one can so that people get what they deserve. To those who have done wrong, the punishment they deserve, and to those who have not done wrong to be exonerated.

6. “Righteousness” – The Hebrew word is “Tsedaqah.” It means to be in right relationship with God and people. In the context of Amos it particularly means to be in right relationship with people no matter their social distances.

Amos 6:1 Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come!

7. God uses sarcasm here to mock three items: (1) Their complacency, (2) their false sense of security, and (3) their pride. They prided themselves as “notable men,” a “foremost nation,” and their belief that people wanted to come there.

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: Amos 7-9—Visions of Amos

Amos 7:7 This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. ⁸ And the LORD asked me, “What do you see, Amos?” “A plumb line,” I replied. Then the Lord said, “Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. ⁹ “The high places of Isaac will be destroyed and the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam.”

1. God’s justice is perfect. It is illustrated by a plumb line that hangs straight down along a wall.

2. Amaziah, one of the northern kingdom priests accused Amos of sedition against the king. Amaziah confronted Amos and commanded him to stop prophesying against their nation.

Amos 7:14 Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. ¹⁵ But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’ ¹⁶ Now then, hear the word of the LORD. You say, ‘Do not prophesy against Israel, and stop preaching against the descendants of Isaac.

¹⁷ “Therefore this is what the LORD says: “ ‘Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured and divided up, and you yourself will die in a pagan country. And Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.’”

3. The results were as Amos predicted.

Israel’s Restoration

*Amos 9:11 “In that day I will restore David’s fallen shelter—I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins—and will rebuild it as it used to be, ¹² so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and **all the nations that bear my name,**” declares the LORD, who will do these things.*

¹³ “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, ¹⁴ and I will bring my people Israel back from exile. They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. ¹⁵ I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,” says the LORD your God.

4. This prophecy has a double meaning. To the people who first heard these words it gave them hope that one day they would return to their land, and that God would once again renew and replenish what was lost.

5. What they likely did not hear in this prophecy is referenced in verses 11-12. The promises to David of a king that would be a blessing to “all the nations.” It is God’s stunning reversal of what sin had destroyed. It foreshadows the work of the coming Messiah for all people.

6. What strikes you from today’s devotional?