

## Amos

### "Seek the Lord & Live"

Imago Dei Church | 7/21/19 | 2 Services | Sunday AM

## INTRODUCTION

Minor Prophets: **Hosea** (God's love for his people); **Joel** ("day of the Lord"; God's judgement and salvation)

Book of the 12 is a unit, and so it's not surprising that Amos picks up with similar themes.

**Main Idea: God's righteous judgment of injustice and hypocrisy drives us to repent and trust in his grace.**

## INTRODUCTION TO AMOS

(AMOS 1-2)

The first 2 chapters serve as a kind of introduction to the book as a whole, so let's start there to get ourselves oriented.

### **1. AN UNLIKELY PROPHET (1:1)**

The words of Amos, who was among the **shepherds** of Tekoa, which he saw **concerning Israel ...**

Shepherd

Sycamore fig farmer (cf. 7:14)

**(APP) God can use anyone who will be faithful.**

From Tekoa (in Judah), yet prophesying Israel

## 2. AN UNSUSPECTING NATION (1:1-2)

... in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

8<sup>th</sup> C. BC

This is a time of relative peace and prosperity.

Yet Amos' message is heavy; gloom and doom.  
(Eeyore, or angry?)

2 And he said: "The Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers."

Throughout the book, Amos frequently points his finger at those who are well-off.

6:1 "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria..."

6:4 "Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall

In addition, the **major world powers** at the time were experiencing times of **relative (not total) weakness**.

The people of Israel were, by and large, not in a situation where a message of impending

judgment would have seemed plausible or welcome.

### 3. AN UNRIGHTEOUS CONTEXT (1:3-2:5)

Amos begins his message by declaring judgment on all of Israel’s neighbors.

6 Pagan nations (1:3-2:3)

Judah (2:4-5)

Couple noteworthy features:

- **Common intro** — “For three transgressions of \_\_\_\_, and for four...”
- **Common punishment** — “fire”
- **Common target** — “strongholds”
- **Common resolve** — “I will not revoke the punishment”
- **Common offense** — sins against one another
  - **Except Judah** — sin against God’s law

These other bordering unrighteous nations, though, set the stage for the main target:

### 4. AN UNGODLY AND UNRESPONSIVE PEOPLE (2:6-12)

I don't think it's an accident that Amos points out 2 main sins in the surrounding nations—**social injustice and religious hypocrisy**. I think he points those out because *they were Israel's problem too*.

It's almost as though God is showing us that **the things the Godless nations are guilty of...Israel is even worse!**

So much so that in 9:7 — 7 “**Are you not like the Cushites to me, O people of Israel?**” declares the Lord. “**Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?** — He says their sin have basically made his covenant people indistinguishable from the pagan nations he used Israel to drive out!

This is a particularly stinging rebuke of Israel, and it's meant to be. **God is particularly offended** that they would reject him like they have BECAUSE he had loved them in a special way — **3:2 “You only** have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

## (ILL) Hosea taking the prophet Gomer (APP)

So in chapter 2 Amos introduces us to Israel's faults:

2:7 [they] trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted; a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned; 8 they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.

They are marked by:

- Injustice towards the righteous and the marginalized (6-7)
- Sexual immorality (7)
- Idolatry (8)
- Taking advantage of the poor (8)
- Irreverence towards God (8)

He goes on to charge them with taking advantage of God's salvation & rejecting God's prophets (2:10-12).

And so, Amos delivers to this Ungodly and Unresponsive people...

### **5. AN UNRELENTING JUDGMENT (2:13-16)**

Just like God would not relent from his judgment on the other nations, Israel will be punished.

vv. 13-16 describe the coming judgment as a “**pressing down**”.

(ILL) Swaddling as torturous; hydraulic press GIFs

The “**pressing down**” of the Lord would be such that whatever perceive strength they might have, it would be incapacitated and ineffective to avoid God’s judgment:

**Speed** (14-15), **Might** (14), **Skill** (15), **Bravery** (16)—None of these things will save Israel when the Lord’s judgment comes.

In ch.7, Amos actually intercedes a few times on behalf of Israel, and God listens and relents. But the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, the Lord says that he can no longer relent.

So that’s a brief introduction to the themes we find in this book.

Now I want to spend the rest of our time giving 4 exhortations from the other 7 chapters which I think

help us summarize and apply the rest of Amos' message.

## 1. HEED THE LORD'S DISCIPLINE FOR SIN. (AMOS 3-4)

Chapters 3-5 all begin with the same phrase: "Hear this word..." — "PAY ATTENTION!"

Makes sense, since he has a message...but there's a particular force in this summons, because it appears Israel has had difficulty connecting the dots in the past.

For all of chapter 3 and half of chapter 4, Amos is really drilling down on Israel's offenses and describing in gruesome detail the punishment that's coming:

**3:12** Thus says the Lord: "As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed.

**4:2** The Lord God has sworn by his holiness that, behold, the days are coming upon you, when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks.

The scene is tragic, but it's all the more tragic when we read what follows in 4:6-13:

Famine  
Drought

Crop failure / locusts  
 Drought  
 Violence  
 Disaster

With one common refrain: **“yet you did not return to me.”**

**4:12** “Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!”

(APP) It is a kindness of our loving God that he disciplines his people for our sin.

**Psalm 94:12**

[12] Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law, (ESV)

**Proverbs 12:1**

[1] Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid. (ESV)

**Hebrews 12:6**

[6] For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” (ESV)

(APP) We see the Lord’s kindness to Israel in how patient and kind he was to try and try and try to warn them about their sin, and it is a kindness to us when we receive discipline for sin. He’s treating us like sons.



When we experience the consequences of our sin, the Lord is teaching us something. That doesn't mean we have to love it or seek it out, but are meant to heed his discipline. **He's teaching us to hate sin and love him.**

And you may be saying something like, "**well it doesn't feel very loving.**" But Christian here is your comfort: if you are in Christ, the loving discipline of God is the most severe punishment you will ever receive from him. Your sin deserves more than his discipline...it deserves his wrath! But in the gospel God tells us that he's poured out his wrath on another so that you will never have to experience it.

Instead, you receive his loving, disciplining hand that is meant to teach you to HATE sin because you see how terrible it is, and to LOVE GOD because you see how loving and gracious he is.

And when we complain and grumble and convince ourselves that the Lord's discipline isn't fair, we only reveal how low we think of our holy God, how little we are concerned with our sin, and how highly we consider ourselves.

One specific application of this is church discipline...

Non-Christian—do not presume upon the Lord's kindness.

## 2. TURN TO THE LORD AWAY FROM SIN. (AMOS 5)

This is the chapter that was read before the sermon, and it gives us the appropriate response to sin in our lives: **seek the Lord, and live (5:4, 6, 14, 15).**

(ILL) One of the joys we have as Christians in the local church is that we can be honest about being sinners and ask others to help. (esp. we pastors have the opportunity to walk with members of this church in fighting sin.)

Most of the time when I'm talking to someone who is wrestling with sin, my instruction is very simple: **repent and believe**. Our ongoing response to sin in the Christian life is the same as our initial response to sin when the gospel was preached to us: repent of sin and believe in God's saving work in Christ Jesus on your behalf.

Though it is in the OT, we have a very similar framework in this passage: turn away from sin, turn to God, and live.

Several specific exhortations for what it would look like for the Israelites to turn from their sin:

1. **Reject fake religious performance (4:4-5)**
2. **Reject idolatry (5:4-6)** — "Seek me and live; 5 but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing. Seek the Lord and live"
3. **Reject hypocritical religion (5:21-24)** — (APP social justice & mercy)

### 3. FEAR THE LORD'S JUDGMENT OF SIN. (AMOS 6:1-9:7)

Much of the latter half of Amos is dedicated to predicting and describing the judgment that God is bringing.

Ch. 6 – woes

CH. 7 & 8 — visions (plumb line & ripe fruit)

7:10ff — Amaziah opposes Amos

These chapters are meant to build the dread we feel about the Lord's judgment on sin.

Some were foolishly longing for the "day of the Lord," thinking that it was a happy occasion:

**5:18** Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light, 19 as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. 20 Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

Chapter 8 gives us a sample of what was to come:

Dead bodies (v.3)

Darkness (v.9)

Silence from God (vv.11-12)

(APP) Friends, the point for us here is not doom and gloom, because as we mentioned we believe that God has saved us from our sins and delivered us from the death and punishment we deserve into his family.

But we would be fools in the same way Ancient Israel was to assume that because God has been kind to rescue us from slavery that we may now assume that his hatred of sin has diminished.

If you find yourself taking sin lightly, I plead with you to look at the cross of Christ and tremble before a God

that would put his own Son to death in order to defeat it! Marvel at the terror of God's judgment for sin!

But do not stop there...

#### 4. RECEIVE THE LORD'S DELIVERANCE FROM SIN.

(Amos 9:8-15)

God's character is further revealed in the conclusion of Amos.

**9:8** Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, **except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,**" declares the Lord.

At the end of this **message of judgment** is a **promise of faithfulness**.

God had covenanted with his people to use them to establish his kingdom.

They had failed miserably. But he had not.

They walked away from their responsibility, but he held fast to his plan.

There are certain aspects of this hopeful ending that would be fulfilled when God's people would return from the coming exile.

But there are some aspects that point to a greater fulfillment. God would preserve a remnant, and through that remnant he would send the true and faithful Israel, Jesus Christ.

Who would never sin and would never turn away.

He would come as the fulfillment of the people of Israel so that he could be the beginning of a new people.

He would live the life of faithfulness and sinlessness that no one else could, and then receive the punishment of death and judgment that everyone else deserved.

And then he would rise from the dead to guarantee LIFE.

**Friends, the application for us is the same that it was in Amos' day: Seek the Lord, and Live.** Except we don't have to look far, because he has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ. **In the face of** our sinfulness. **In the face of** our failures and our injustice. **In the face of** our weakness. **Let's TURN to a great and awesome Savior, and LIVE forgiven and transformed lives in him.**