

Mid Week • Amos 6-9

INTRODUCTION

We we're able to get all the way through Amos in our last study, so we'll cover chapters 6-9 tonight.

Let's recap a bit on who Amos was and when He prophesied.

Amos was a farmer from Judah who received a call from God to go to the northern nation of Israel and warn them of judgments to come.

The year was 760 BC, and both Israel and Judah were prospering.

The surrounding empires of Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, and the rest were in decline.

Internal problems and stiff competition for the throne in these nations kept them preoccupied with their own internal issues and stopped their armies from engaging in wars of conquest and expansion.

Assyria was the first nation to break out of this and so became the next major power of the area which fulfilled the dire warnings of judgment Amos foretells in this book.

But at the time Amos prophesied, Israel was prosperous and safe.

Under this surface of good times, the nation was corrupt to the core.

Greed and Injustice were abundant.

The poor were being ripped off by the rich.

The court system was being used as a tool by the wealthy to steal from the poor.

The kings of Israel were committing acts of indescribable evil.

The people were engaging in all kinds of gross immorality.

And collectively, the nation had turned it's back on God.

The people mouthed the name of Jehovah, but they worshipped Him in the form of a golden bull – and practiced pagan rites of worship that were abominable to God.

AMOS 6

In Chapter 6, God challenges the people to be reasonable.

He invites them to go take a look at the surrounding nations who have known His judgment.

Do they think they are better?

No – they are in fact *worse* because they had been given the Word of God and yet sinned even more grossly than the heathen.

1 Woe to you *who are* at ease in Zion, And trust in Mount Samaria, Notable persons in the chief nation, To whom the house of Israel comes!

Zion refers to Jerusalem!

There was a fairly close alliance between the northern and southern kingdoms at this time and here the southern kingdom of Judah comes in for warning as well.

They were trusting in Israel's prosperity and military power to act as a buffer against invasion from the northern nations of Assyria and Babylon.

Their trust would prove ill founded.

2 Go over to Calneh and see; And from there go to Hamath the great; Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. *Are you* better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory?

All three of these important and powerful cities, which lie outside the borders of Israel, had been conquered by their enemies.

God tells the Israelites to go and take a look at them and learn the lesson they teach – that when God says a city will fall, it will fall!

3 *Woe to you* who put far off the day of doom, Who cause the seat of violence to come near;

4 Who lie on beds of ivory, Stretch out on your couches, Eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall;

5 Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, *And* invent for yourselves musical instruments like David;

6 Who drink wine from bowls, And anoint yourselves with the best ointments, But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

God cautions those who refuse to heed the warnings He sends through the prophets and through the signs of judgment He sends them.

They admit judgment will one day come, but their “one-day” is in the distant future.

They think their days will be filled only with luxury and pleasure. They consume their time and energy in enjoying the good life. And leave the bill for their gross consumption and moral pollution to a future generation.

It reminds me of the bumper sticker you see on the occasional RV – “I’m spending my child’s inheritance.”

In light of what God says here, it would be wise for us to stop and consider what warnings the Lord has sent us?

Are there prophetic voices today who are declaring the “woes” of God?

Are there signs of judgment befalling our nations today?

Could the resurgence of diseases like Tuberculosis, Influenza, and Hepatitis be a sign that we have sown to the wind and now are reaping the whirlwind?

Could the terrible plague called AIDS be a sign of judgment on the immorality of our age?

Could the current economic quakes that are rocking our nation be revealing the fundamental faults that are in place in our system?

Could the recent rash of school shootings be evidence that in rejecting God from our educational system we have given rise to a generation of the hopeless and amoral?

Yet the beat goes on.

Most people recline in their lounge chair, remote firmly in hand, refusing to believe that the end may come sooner rather than later.

God’s whole point in this is to warn the people that judgment is not some far off eventuality – that it is coming soon and the time to repent is NOW!

7 Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, And those who recline at banquets shall be removed.

8 The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, The LORD God of hosts says: “I abhor the pride of Jacob, And hate his palaces; Therefore I will deliver up *the city* And all that is in it.”

The pride and hubris of Israel provoked God.

I read an article yesterday in a past issue of US News & World Report.

It was from just after the Olympics and focused on the problem of growing international anger at the USA.

The lead in spoke of the celebrating done by the 440 meter relay team after their victory in the Sydney Olympics.

Though the race lasted less than a minutes, the 4 runners paraded around the track, draped in American flags for 20 minutes – showboating and taunting the crowd.

As the celebrating went on and on, many people in the crowd began to boo and give cat-calls.

It turns out that the USA went away from the Olympics with a lot of medals, and a lot of animosity on the part of the other nations of the world.

We are often perceived as arrogant and superior.

The ugly-American syndrome is well known in travel circles around the world.

These verses ought to be a sober wake up call to us that God finds national arrogance and hubris offensive and that it provokes His judgment.

All that we enjoy as a nation is the result of God’s blessing, not our own ingenuity.

And God has blessed this nation because it was founded on Biblical principles and has been devoted to spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth.

When we forsake that foundation and mission, we are certainly headed for a day of reckoning.

9 Then it shall come to pass, that if ten men remain in one house, they shall die. ¹⁰ And when a relative *of the dead*, with one who will burn *the bodies*, picks up the bodies to take them out of the house, he will say to one inside

the house, “Are there any more with you?”

Then someone will say, “None.”

And he will say, “Hold your tongue! For we dare not mention the name of the LORD.”

I realize this seems a bit confusing, but here’s what this means . . .

God would so completely judge the nation that even if 10 men should hide in one house to escape the sword, they would die of disease.

A relative who came to take the bodies to burn them would be so afraid of contamination that if he discovered a survivor hiding in the house he would beg him not even to mention the Lord’s name in any way because to do so might draw God’s attention to those whom He had overlooked, and cause Him to slay them also. [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

11 For behold, the LORD gives a command: He will break the great house into bits, And the little house into pieces.

12 Do horses run on rocks? Does *one* plow *there* with oxen? Yet you have turned justice into gall, And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood,

13 You who rejoice over Lo Debar, Who say, “Have we not taken Karnaim for ourselves By our own strength?”

14 “But, behold, I will raise up a nation against you, O house of Israel,” Says the LORD God of hosts; “And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath To the Valley of the Arabah.”

Israel thought their prosperity was the result of their own goodness and strength.

God reminds them all they had was His blessing – and now they would lose it all to their enemies.

AMOS 7

In chs. 7-9, Amos has 5 visions of judgment.

Three Sundays ago, we looked at 7:1-9 and the first three visions

The first two move the prophet to plead for mercy, which God

answers.

But with the third vision, God tells Him the delay is over and judgment must now come.

If you weren't here for the message on Prayer and the Will of God, get a copy of the tape.

Jump on down now to v. 10

Vs. 10-17 are a short narrative section . . .

- 10** Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. ¹¹For thus Amos has said: 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, And Israel shall surely be led away captive From their own land.'"
- 12** Then Amaziah said to Amos: "Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, And there prophesy.
- 13** But never again prophesy at Bethel, For it *is* the king's sanctuary, And it *is* the royal residence."
- 14** Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: "I was no prophet, Nor was I a son of a prophet, But I was a sheepbreeder and a tender of sycamore fruit.
- 15** Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, And the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.'
- 16** Now therefore, hear the word of the LORD: You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel, And do not spout against the house of Isaac.'
- 17** "Therefore thus says the LORD: 'Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; Your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; Your land shall be divided by *survey* line; You shall die in a defiled land; And Israel shall surely be led away captive From his own land.'"

Amaziah was the high priest at Bethel, the main center of religion in the northern kingdom.

He went to Amos who had set himself up near there and told him

to shut up!

He even went to the King and tried to get official permission to stop Amos by claiming he was saying treasonous things about the King.

Amos reply was – “Look, I didn’t take this job on myself. God called me and though the rest of your nation was rejected the Word of the Lord – I will not!”

Amaziah’s rejection of Amos is the official turning point that marks the sure judgment of the nation.

He is the high priest – and if he rejects Amos and his message, it is the final evidence the nation has turned it’s back on God and there is no repentance – no turning back.

AMOS 8

The 4th vision . . .

- 1** Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit. **2** And He said, “Amos, what do you see?” So I said, “A basket of summer fruit.” Then the LORD said to me: “The end has come upon My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore.
- 3** And the songs of the temple Shall be wailing in that day,” Says the Lord GOD—“Many dead bodies everywhere, They shall be thrown out in silence.”
- 4** Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, And make the poor of the land fail,
- 5** Saying: “When will the New Moon be past, That we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, That we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, Falsifying the scales by deceit,
- 6** That we may buy the poor for silver, And the needy for a pair of sandals—Even sell the bad wheat?”
- 7** The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: “Surely I will never forget any of their works.

- 8** Shall the land not tremble for this, And everyone mourn who dwells in it? All of it shall swell like the River, Heave and subside Like the River of Egypt.
- 9** “And it shall come to pass in that day,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will make the sun go down at noon, And I will darken the earth in broad daylight;
- 10** I will turn your feasts into mourning, And all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, And baldness on every head; I will make it like mourning for an only son, And its end like a bitter day.
- 11** “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, But of hearing the words of the LORD.
- 12** They shall wander from sea to sea, And from north to east; They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, But shall not find *it*.
- 13** “In that day the fair virgins And strong young men Shall faint from thirst.
- 14** Those who swear by the sin of Samaria, Who say, ‘As your god lives, O Dan!’ And, ‘As the way of Beersheba lives!’ They shall fall and never rise again.”

This amply pictures the devastation left behind by the Assyrians.

They left the land depopulated and desolate.

The nation, once rich and prosperous, became a wilderness.

The towns, once thriving with trade, became ghost-towns.

AMOS 9

- 1** I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and He said: “Strike the doorposts, that the thresholds may shake, And break them on the heads of them all. I will slay the last of them with the sword.

He who flees from them shall not get away, And he who

escapes from them shall not be delivered.

- 2** “Though they dig into hell, From there My hand shall take them; Though they climb up to heaven, From there I will bring them down;
- 3** And though they hide themselves on top of Carmel, From there I will search and take them;
Though they hide from My sight at the bottom of the sea, From there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them;
- 4** Though they go into captivity before their enemies, From there I will command the sword,
And it shall slay them. I will set My eyes on them for harm and not for good.”

God’s judgment of Israel will be inescapable!

- 5** The Lord GOD of hosts, He who touches the earth and it melts, And all who dwell there mourn; All of it shall swell like the **○**River, And subside like the River of Egypt.
- 6** He who builds His layers in the sky, And has founded His strata in the earth; Who calls for the waters of the sea, And pours them out on the face of the earth— The LORD *is* His name.
- 7** “Are you not like the people of Ethiopia to Me, O children of Israel?” says the LORD. “Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, The Philistines from Caphtor, And the Syrians from Kir?”
- 8** “Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD *are* on the sinful kingdom, And I will destroy it from the face of the earth; Yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,” Says the LORD.

God is just hammering them with the completeness of the judgment He will bring.

But now, with v. 9, things turn a corner . . .

9 “For surely I will command, And will sift the house of Israel among all nations, As *grain* is sifted in a sieve; Yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.

Sifting is done to sort things out!

God is saying that while He is judging them for their gross injustice, He will be exact in His judgment!

He will make a difference between the *wantonly immoral* and those who have been *tender* toward Him.

Notice what he says in v. 10

10 All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, Who say, ‘The calamity shall not overtake nor confront us.’

It’s the sinners who shall be delivered to the sword.

But the righteous God will deliver.

11 “On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old;

12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,” Says the LORD who does this thing.

Yes judgment is coming – but judgment is not the end of the story.

Once judgment has been properly meted out, God will move to restore His people and renew His work.

His covenant with the remnant of the faithful will be renewed.

And through this remnant, even the Gentiles will come to faith in God.

13 “Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “When the plowman shall overtake the reaper,

And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, And all the hills shall flow *with it*.

The abundance of the Day of Restoration will be so great that reapers

and harvesters will get in each other's way as they seek to plant seed and pick crops.

14 I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit *them*; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.

15 I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them," Says the LORD your God.

There are many who believe the beginning of the fulfillment of this is being seen in our day.

The Jews are back in their land and they have turned the desolations and wilderness into fertile and fruitful land.

Of course, the real fulfillment of this will be when Messiah comes and rules over the nation.

But the current re-gathering of the Jews to Israel may very well mark the beginning of this age.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was recently in the US and delivered several speeches in which he strongly urged Jews, specially the highly educated, to return to Israel and assist them.

A new wave of Jewish emigration from the republics of the former Soviet Union has begun that is seeing literally thousands of people flood in to Israel every month.

These people are highly motivated to settle down and start new lives as farmers and technical professionals.

CONCLUSION

Amos is a book that speaks mainly of judgment.

But even in the darkest and severest passages, God turns to plead with the people to repent.

Right in the middle of the dour predictions of death and ruin He cries out, "Seek Me & live!"

Our God is a God of mercy and grace.

May sinners avail themselves of that mercy and grace before it's too late.