

Amos 1

God's judgment on Damascus, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, and Ammon

(The People's Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, pages 179-198)

Look

- Verses 1,2 Amos introduces himself as a shepherd commissioned by the Lord who thundered from Zion. Two years prior to his writing, a devastating earthquake had come as a warning to the entire surrounding area (Zechariah 14:5).
- Verse 4 *"For three sins . . . even for four"*—This numerical expression is also found in Psalms and Proverbs. It imitates how the nation piled up one sin on another, leading to total destruction.

Discuss

1. What is significant about the fact that the Lord thundered from Zion?
2. Locate Damascus on a map. What is another name for Damascus? What did Damascus do to deserve God's judgment?
3. Locate Gaza on a map. What did Gaza do to deserve God's judgment?
4. Locate Tyre on a map. What did Tyre do to deserve God's judgment?
5. Locate Edom on a map. What did Edom do to merit God's judgment?
6. Locate Ammon on a map. What did Ammon do to deserve God's judgment?

Apply

7. What comfort can the Christian church take from this chapter?

The Lord promised judgment on the nations around his people because of their cruelty.

Amos 2

God's judgment on Moab, Judah, and Israel

(*The People's Bible*, Hosea, Joel, Amos, pages 195-205)

Look

- Verse 9 *"I destroyed the Amorite."*—*Amorite* was a generic term for the inhabitants of Canaan. God had preserved the patriarchs during their stay there, and he had destroyed the Amorites when Israel took the land.
- Verse 11 *"Nazirites"*—A Nazirite was a faithful Israelite who took a special vow as part of his worship life. Often, the vow was made out of thanks to the Lord for a prayer answered or a blessing received. The Nazirite vowed not to drink strong drink, not to touch a dead body, and not to cut his hair—for the duration of the vow.

Discuss

1. Locate Moab on a map. How was Moab's sin different from the rest of the sins committed by foreign nations against Israel?
2. What two sins was Judah committing even while Amos spoke to it?
3. What were the sins of Israel for which God condemned it?
4. In verses 9-16, the Lord summarizes his grace, his people's rebellion, and his impending judgment. Which verses contain each of these themes?

Apply

5. What blessings has the Lord given you? What will happen if Christians misuse those blessings? (See 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 and 2 Corinthians 6:1,2.)

The Lord censured Moab, Judah, and Israel for their sins.

Amos 3

The cause of God's judgment on Israel

(The People's Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, pages 206-214)

Look

Verse 12 *"Two leg bones or a piece of an ear"*—If an animal were killed by a wild beast, the shepherd or the person who found it would bring it to the owner as proof that he did not steal it.

"The edge of their beds . . . in Damascus on their couches"—The meanings of the words translated "edge" and "Damascus" are uncertain. Amos may be saying that only a few remnants from the luxurious homes of the upper class in Samaria would be saved.

Discuss

1. Why would the Lord punish the house of Israel for its sins? (verses 1,2)

2. In verses 3-6, the prophet points out a list of causes and effects. Point out the cause and effect in each pair of lines. What will Israel soon see happening to it? What is the underlying cause?

3. What comfort does God give his people—the true believers, that is?

4. Whom does the Lord call as witnesses to his people's wickedness? Why do you think he uses these people as witnesses?

5. Verse 12 is very ironic. In what would Israel's salvation consist?

6. What is significant about the altar at Bethel? about Israel's large and richly decorated houses?

Apply

7. How does the principle Jesus expresses in Luke 12:47,48 apply to Christians?

The Lord continued to announce his judgment on Israel and Judah.

Amos 4

Amos calls Israel to repentance

(The People's Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, pages 214-220)

Look

Verse 10 *"The stench of your camps"*—This might be caused by the horribly wounded who were gathered in the Israelites camps, by disease in army camps or refugee camps, or by disease in a besieged city.

Discuss

1. How do verses 1-3 characterize the wealthy women of Samaria? What happened to them?
2. Look at verses 4 and 5. Is the Lord really telling the people to sacrifice at Bethel? What figure of speech is he using in these two verses?
3. The Lord's punishments on Israel should have caused it to return to the Lord. According to the following verses, what chastisements had the Lord brought on Israel?
 - verse 6
 - verses 7,8
 - verse 9
 - verse 10
 - verse 11
4. What should Israel do now since it had rejected the Lord's discipline? (verse 12)

Apply

5. What impression does the description of God in verse 13 make on you? How might you apply that to your life?

The Lord was patient with Israel, but Israel continued to reject the Lord's chastening hand. Therefore Israel was told to prepare to meet its God.

Amos 5

Israel has not returned to the Lord

(The People's Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, pages 220-234)

Discuss

1. The fall of the Northern Kingdom is pictured figuratively in verse 2. What concrete details are given in verse 3?
2. What did seeking the Lord mean for Israel, besides worshiping in the place he designated? (See Isaiah 55:6,7.)
3. The Lord had made Israel for himself. Every Israelite was precious to him. Yet what were the rich and powerful doing to their fellow Israelites? (verses 7-13)
4. How were the people of Israel fooling themselves, according to verse 14?
5. The people of Israel longed for the day of the Lord, imagining it to be a day of blessing for them. What would the day of the Lord mean for them? (verses 18-20)
6. Assemblies and offerings were instituted by the Lord in the ceremonial law. Why does he “hate” and “despise” them? (See Isaiah 1:11 for similar statements.) What did the Lord want from the Israelites rather than their offerings? (verses 21-24)
7. What characterized Israel from the beginning of its existence as a nation? (verses 25-27)

Apply

8. What comfort is there for believers in the Lord in being able to say “the Lord is with us”?
9. Comment on this statement: “Worship is life, and life is worship.”

The Lord urged Israel to repent. But if it continued in its wickedness, Israel would be taken into exile far beyond Damascus.

Amos 6

Woe to the complacent

(The People's Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, pages 234-241)

Look

- Verse 1 *"Zion"*—The Northern Kingdom and Judah are addressed in this chapter of woes.
- Verse 2 *"Calneh . . . Hamath . . . Gath"*—These were great and powerful cities of the day. Yet the Lord had made Israel greater than them. The point is that Israel was rejecting the Lord's blessings.
- Verse 3 *"Put off the evil day."* The leaders brushed off the words of the prophets and said they would never happen.
- Verse 10 *"We must not mention the name of the LORD."* In this chapter, we witness the time when the Lord had forsaken Zion. The terror of the Lord was so great that people didn't even want to mention his name.

Discuss

1. Verses 1-7 picture the life of the wealthy Israelites in the last years of the Northern Kingdom. Why did Jesus say, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God"? (Luke 18:24).
2. In what sense was "Joseph" (the Northern Kingdom, which included the tribes of Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh) ruined? (verse 6)
3. According to verses 8, 11, and 14, who is the cause of all the destruction Israel will experience at the hands of the Assyrians? What should this lead Israel to do?
4. Verse 12 may be based on a proverb. In what way is Israel like the foolish farmer in the first half of this verse?
5. Israel boasted of its victories under Jeroboam II (who did, in fact, usher in a time of prosperity for Israel). Yet what would the Lord do to Israel and Judah?

Apply

6. Do we as a church point with pride at impressive buildings while failing to show love to fellow believers who need our help? Do we congratulate ourselves over the success of an ecclesiastical program without caring how it serves God's will to save all people?

The Lord continued to warn Judah and Israel of his wrath and impending judgment. Repent!

Amos 7

Three clear visions of judgment

(The People's Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, pages 242-249)

Discuss

1. Chapters 7–9 contain five visions. The first three are in this chapter. What is each vision, and what point does the Lord want to teach Israel with each vision?
 - verses 1-3 Vision:
 - Lesson:

 - verses 4-6 Vision:
 - Lesson:

 - verses 7-9 Vision:
 - Lesson:

2. Amos' third vision proved to be a particularly dangerous one for him. How so? (verses 10-13) What veiled accusation did Amaziah make to Amos? (verses 12,13)

3. Why was Amaziah terribly mistaken?

4. How would Amaziah someday realize his great error? (verses 14-17)

Apply

5. In response to the prophet's prayers, the Lord "relented" and did not destroy his people. See also Moses' prayer in Exodus 32:9-14. Comment on this statement: "There is no use praying. God has already decided what he is going to do."

6. What must we do if people tell us not to preach God's Word?

Amos continued to preach against Israel even as he prayed that God would spare it.

Amos 8

Israel is ripe for destruction

(The People's Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, pages 249-257)

Look

Verse 1 *“Ripe fruit”*—In Hebrew, the words for “summer fruit” and “end” include the same consonants. The NIV translators convey the Hebrew pun by using the English word *ripe*, which can have the same double meaning.

Discuss

1. Chapters 7–9 contain five visions. This chapter contains the fourth vision. What is this vision, and what point does the Lord want to teach Israel with it?
 - verses 1,2 Vision:
 - Lesson:

2. If the Lord had already decided to bring the history of the Northern Kingdom to an end, why did he send Amos to preach in Israel?

3. The Lord would judge his people for their greed and trickery. Find four methods the Israelite grain merchants used to cheat their customers and oppress their fellow Israelites.

4. What two great judgments would the Lord bring on his wayward people?
 - verses 7-10

 - verses 11,12

5. Why would all of these sufferings come on Israel? (verses 13,14)

Apply

6. How can we take these words to heart?

The Lord would judge Israel for its wickedness, as illustrated in the corrupt practices of its merchants. Physical and spiritual catastrophes were in its future.

Amos 9

Israel will be destroyed, but in the end, it will be restored

(The People's Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, pages 257-273)

Look

Verse 5 *"The LORD Almighty"*—The almighty God is the LORD, who has power over all the forces of nature. These natural forces have often been elevated to the status of earthly deities, but only the Lord is the true God who rules over all things.

Discuss

- Chapters 7–9 contain five visions. This chapter contains the final vision. What is this vision, and what point does the Lord want to teach Israel with it?
verses 1,2 Vision:
Lesson:
- We find great comfort in the fact that God watches over us. But there is another side to the Lord's watching over his creation. What is that, according to verse 4?
- In verses 7-10, the Lord picks up on four reasons the Israelites were using to find a sense of confidence in their relationship with the Lord. How does the Lord answer them?
 - We are the children of Israel.
 - The Lord delivered us from Egypt.
 - The Lord's eyes are on us.
 - Evil will not overtake us.
- Over 90 percent of Amos' prophecies are severe punishments, often ending in total destruction. Yet God's final word to Israel is a word of grace and blessing. What does it mean that the Lord will rebuild "David's fallen tent"? When will verses 13-15 come to pass?

Apply

- Why can we say that we also are included in the fulfillment of verses 11 and 12?

The Lord would completely destroy the nation of Israel for its idolatry. Yet in the days ahead, he would restore it, reestablish David's kingdom, and never uproot it again.