

## AMOS THE PROPHET OF GOD'S JUSTICE

### INTRODUCTION:

1. 5:24 *"But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream."*
2. 8:2 *"The end has come upon My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore."*

### I. ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

- A. A native of Tekoa, a small village 12 miles South of Jerusalem, 22 miles from Bethel.
  - 1) It was a lonely sparsely populated district
  - 2) The Dead Sea was about 18 miles away.
- B. His name means *"One Who Bears Burdens."*
- C. No father's name is mentioned suggesting that he was from a poor, obscure family.
- D. His occupation:
  - 1) He was a "shepherd" or as the NKJV translates "sheep-breeder."
    - a) "Noked" wool was from an ugly type of sheep, small, stunted in growth, with short legs and an ill-formed face (Amos 1: noqeed; from a Hebrew root naaqad to select the best among a species of sheep and goats, ill-shapen and short-footed, but distinguished by their wool (Maurer).
    - b) But the wool was fine (thin) in texture and used to make expensive garments.
  - 2) He was also a dresser or "tender" of "sycamore fruit" (7:14c).
    - a) Dresser is actually the word for "pincher."
    - b) The unripe fruit had to be punctured to promote ripening.
    - c) Also, the fruit was often infested with insects and inedible until it was punctured and the insects were allowed to escape.
- E. His ministry:
  - 1) He was not a professional prophet (7:14).
  - 2) He was a humble shepherd called to be prophet.
  - 3) Nor had he been to school for prophets (2Kings 2:3) "Sons of the prophets in Bethel."
  - 4) God had specially called him for this mission.
  - 5) It is thought by many that this was his only mission as a prophet.
  - 6) His assignment as a prophet was to denounce the people of the northern kingdom of Israel for their idol worship, corruption, and oppression of the poor.
  - 7) Although he prophesied to the Northern Kingdom, Amos was a native of Judah, Israel's sister nation to the south.
  - 8) When his authority in Israel was questioned by Amaziah the priest, Amos admitted he was not descended from a line of prophets or other religious officials.
    - a) By vocation, he claimed to be nothing but "a herdsman and a tender of sycamore fruit" (Amos 7:14),
    - b) But he pointed out that his right to speak came from the highest authority of all: *"The Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel'"* (Amos 7:15).
    - c) Amos spoke because the Lord had called him to deliver His message of judgment.

- 5) He was deeply devoted to God and His law.
- 6) His preaching style was blunt, courageous and powerful.
  - a) He has been called the "John the Baptist" of the Old Testament.
  - b) His message was a powerful call to repentance.
  - c) He is also widely known as the "plumbline preacher"
- 7) His writings are considered by many to be the oldest of the prophets to survive.
- \*8) He was a first-rate orator, using the Hebrew without blemish.
  - a) The style of Amos is finished and refined.
  - b) He uses the language of the common people & draws his illustrations from nature and rural life;
  - c) But on the other hand, he shows an intimate acquaintance with the Mosaic law and his nation's history.

F. The background of his work:

- 1) The Assyrians had long threatened to invade and take over the Northern Kingdom.
- 2) Jeroboam II, the 14<sup>th</sup> king of Israel, had been their King for about 25 years.
- 3) He reigned for a total 41 years (793 BC - 753 BC).
- 4) Jeroboam was successful in his military adventures.
- 5) His aggressive military campaigns had expanded the boundaries of Israel to their greatest extent since the days of David and Solomon:
- 6) *"He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah"* (2 Kings 14:25).
- 7) Both Kingdoms had for years enjoyed a period of success and prosperity.
  - a) With the prosperity came luxury and corruption in government and justice and extremely low morals.
  - b) The poor were crushed and abused by the greed of the wealthy.
- 8) Religion had degenerated into a commercial racket.

G. His mission: Go to Bethel the religious center of the North and proclaim the doom of the nation.

- 1) A small town about 10 miles north of Jerusalem (just inside the Southern border of the Northern Kingdom).
- 2) Jeroboam I had erected a golden calf there (I Kings 12:28-29).
- 3) Jacob had his dream about a ladder to Heaven there (Genesis 28:10-19).
- 4) It was a holy, religious shrine to the people of the North.

**III. ABOUT THE BOOK:** 9 chapters with a total of 146 verses in English.

- A. In the first major section of the book Amos begins with biting words of judgment against seven nations surrounding the land of Israel. Damascus (1:3-5), Gaza (1:6-8), Tyre (1:9-10), Edom (1:11-12), Ammon (1:13-15), Moab (2:1-3), Judah (2:4-5) Because of Israel's bitterness toward Judah, Amos' listeners must have greeted this cry of doom with joy.

**But Amos was only warming up to the main part of his sermon.**

- a) He launched into a vivid description of God's judgment against the nation of Israel.
- b) With biting sarcasm, Amos condemned the citizens of Israel for their oppression of

the poor (2:7), worship of idols (2:8), rejection of God's salvation (2:9,12), and defilement of the Lord's holy name (2:7).

B. In the second major section of his book (3-6), Amos preached three biting sermons of judgment against the nation of Israel.

1) 3:15 "houses of ivory" were houses of the very rich, lavishly decorated with inlaid ivory.

2) He referred to the wealthy, luxury-seeking women of Samaria-the capital city of Israel-as "cows (kine) of Bashan" (4:1).

a) Fat sleek expensive cattle b) The strongest rebuke of women found in all of scripture!

2) He also attacked the system of idol worship which King Jeroboam had established in the cities of Bethel and Gilgal (4:4; 5:5).

C. 5 Visions pertaining to God's judgment on Israel

1) **7:1-3 Vision of the Locusts:** As the locusts destroy all the crops in their path, God will destroy the nation of Israel because of their wickedness.

2) **7:4-6 Vision of the Fire:** Jehovah's judgment on Israel will be as severe as a fire large enough and hot enough to dry up the sea and devour everything in the land.

3) **7:7-9 Vision of the Plumb Line:** The "walls" of Israel are so out of plumb that they will have to be destroyed and rebuilt."

4) **8:1 Vision of the Summer Fruit:** He described the nation of Israel as a basket of summer fruit, implying that it would soon spoil and rot in the blistering sun of God's judgment — This would have been the last harvest of the year, they had used their last chance to repent. "Many dead bodies everywhere, They shall be thrown out in silence."

5) **9:1-10 Vision of the Doorposts:** Strike the door post and the whole house will come crashing down! God at the altar

D. **But there is hope: A light at the end of the tunnel.**

1) Following these messages of judgment, the Book of Amos ends on a positive, optimistic note.

2) Amos predicted that the people of Israel would be restored to their special place in God's service after their season of judgment had come to an end (9:11-15).

3) This note of hope is characteristic of the Hebrew prophets.

4) They pointed to a glorious future for God's people, even in the midst of dark times.

5) This positive spirit, which issued from Amos' deep faith in God, sustained the prophet and gave him hope for the future.

#### IV. IMPORTANT THEMES AND POPULAR PHRASES FROM AMOS:

A. 3:1-10 "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" Because of the sinful behavior of Israel, God could no longer continue to walk with them or bless them. He had departed

- from them. (Often used by brethren to refer to those who have departed from the faith).
- B. 4:1 "Cows of Bashan" Referring to the wealthy women of Bethel who oppressed the poor.
  - C. 6:1 "At ease in Zion" Refers to the false sense of security that often comes accompanies wealth and prominence.
  - D. 6:4 "Beds of Ivory" refers to complacency that accompanies idleness.
  - E. 8:11 "A famine of hearing the words of the Lord." While they had the opportunity to hear and obey it, they ignored, but soon they will wish they had his word again.
  - F. For the faithful, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel!

#### **V. APPLICATION: LESSONS LEARNED:**

- A. The Book of Amos is one of the most eloquent cries for justice and righteousness to be found in the Bible. And it came through a humble shepherd who dared to deliver God's message to the wealthy and influential people of his day.
- B. His message is just as timely for our world, since God still places a higher value on justice and righteousness than on silver and gold and the things that money will buy.
- C. With wealth, privilege and opportunity comes responsibility.
- D. God has always been patient and gracious in giving His people plenty of warning before coming in judgment.
- E. God will not keep warning forever!
- F. Ease, luxury and idleness often leads God's people to sin.
- G. Selfish indulgence often leaves us deaf to the cries of the poor and oppressed.
- H. The most elaborate of worship if it is insincere, is an insult to God.
- I. God's spokesmen must never be silenced by the worldly-minded!
- J. It is foolish to worship the stars while rebelling against the one who made them! (7:12).
- K. A crooked wall always hates a straight plumb line.