

Amos: Who, What, Why and When?

Written by whom?

The only information we have about the writer is from this book. The name “Amos” probably means ‘burdened’ or ‘burden-bearer’. He lived in Tekoa, an infertile, rocky area in Judah with a view of the Dead Sea. He was probably a poor man and a herdsman. Nothing is known of his education or training, but his literary style is considered to be the freest and purest in the Old Testament.

Written from where and when?

Tekoa was in Judah, the southern Kingdom. It was 6 miles south of Bethlehem and 11 miles from Jerusalem. At this time, the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel were stable, peaceful and prosperous, probably between 760-750 B.C. However, the leaders (Uzziah, king of Judah and Jeroboam II, king of Israel) were unconcerned with the ruin of the peasants. Prosperity was for the privileged few, and they gained their prosperity by ruthlessly trampling on the poor.

Written to whom?

Amos wrote to the northern kingdom of Israel, to warn them of the imminent fall of their nation. This book was the earliest written book of biblical prophecy.

Why was it written?

The people of Amos’ time were very religious, in the sense that they were very careful to follow the rituals—especially the rich, who thought they were in the favor of God and under his protection. They believed that the covenant between them and God could not be broken, and that it gave them privileges and a license to behave however they wished. However, because the nation had become like all the other nations, they gave up their rights to the covenant. They enslaved a large segment of their own people. The land was used for selfish purposes. They rejected the law of God and followed lies. The day of grace was over.

2 Amos: Chapter 1 – Scripture Questions

1. What memorable event does Amos use to establish the time of his writing? (vs. 1)
2. When the Lord “roared” from Zion, what was the effect? (vs. 2)

The next verses concern God’s judgment on neighboring nations. “Three sins, even four...because” was like saying “for several reasons, but especially because...”

Q	City or Nation	Verse	The sin (I will not relent because...)
3.	Damascus (Syria) (NE of Israel)	3	
4.	Gaza (Philistia) (SW of Israel)	6	
5.	Tyre (Phoenicia) (NW of Israel)	9	
6.	Edom (Esau) (SE of Israel)	11	
7.	Ammon (Lot) (E of Israel)	13	

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Amos: Chapter 1 – Summary

Amos is a book of words and visions, also called oracles. While it is aimed primarily at the Northern Kingdom of Israel, it also has warnings for the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He begins by establishing the time period by speaking of an earthquake. While we don't know exactly when this happened, the way Amos uses earthquake language shows that it was memorable enough to make a kind of emotional background for the book.

The theme that Amos sets out is “The Lord roars”. He was a shepherd and knew that the roar of a lion meant danger and tragedy to the shepherd and his flock. This Lion was speaking from his earthly dwelling place, Zion and Jerusalem, and the roar would bring with it a drought that would affect every area of the land.

In announcing the oracles, or prophecies, against foreign nations, Amos seems to be following a familiar pattern to arrange the prophecies geographically. It is known that Egyptian priests would name their neighboring nations in a geographical sequence, then end by cursing those who did evil within Egypt. In a similar way, Amos names six nations surrounding Israel and ends by speaking of the sinners inside Israel. Amos probably knew that the best way to get the Israelite's attention was to talk first about the sins of their neighbors.

Each oracle has the same format: They begin with “Thus says the Lord”, which is followed by a general accusation, and then a specific accusation starting with “because”. Then there is an announcement of judgment. This format came from a time before the invention of writing, when messages could only be sent by messenger. In the Old Testament, prophets were spoken of as messengers of Yahweh, and Amos used this format to emphasize that he was delivering a message from God.

In each oracle, Amos uses the phrases “three transgressions, and for four”. ‘Three’ stands for enough, full, complete, and ‘four’ means more than enough. Amos believed that the sin of a society could reach a saturation point beyond which God would not allow that society to go without judgment striking it. These nations had gone past the point of no return.

4 Amos: Chapter 1 – Application Questions

1. God's announcement (through Amos) is that 'enough is enough'. Judgment is coming, and he will not stop the destruction. How close do you think our country is to this kind of judgment?
2. Damascus (Syria) didn't just defeat Israel: they threshed them, which literally means trampled on the people. What kind of warning does this give us about how we should deal with defeated enemies? What about those that we defeat economically, rather than in open warfare?
3. Both Gaza and Tyre were condemned because they participated in wholesale slavery. What about economic slavery? Would this include companies that have enormous salaries for their top people and barely-above-minimum wage for the people on the bottom?
4. Edom was a nation of Israel's distant relatives. They were descended from the brothers Jacob and Esau: Israel→Jacob, Edom→Esau. Edom never let up on Israel, constantly attacking them. They cherished their anger. Against which nations does our country seem to cherish anger? Is there anything we can do to change this persistent hatred?

Amos: Chapter 2 – Scripture Questions

Q	City or Nation	Verse	The sin (I will not relent because...)
1.	Moab (E of Israel)	1	
2.	Judah (Southern Kingdom)	4	

3. How does God (through Amos) describe the oppression of the poor in verses 6 and 7?
4. How does God (through Amos) describe the immorality of the nobles in verses 7 and 8?
5. What did God do to the Amorites, who occupied the land of Canaan before the Israelites? (vs. 9)
6. Of which salvation does God next remind the Israelites? (vs. 10)
7. How did God give the Israelites instruction? (vs. 11)
8. How did the Israelites reject the examples and instructions of the prophets and Nazarites? (vs. 12)
9. What was going to happen to the Israelites because of their sin? (vs. 13-16)

Amos: Chapter 2 – Summary

The oracle, or prophecy, against Judah may have come as a shock to Amos' listeners. However, religious and moral conditions were almost as bad in Judah at this time as they were in Israel, based on Isaiah's condemnation of Judah. Their sin had two parts: they rejected (despised) the law of the Lord, and they walked after the lies of their fathers, which probably refers to idol worship.

When he moved on to Israel, he may have been referencing an early code of law, similar to the covenant laws given to God's people. The covenant was clear: the poor and weak were not to be oppressed, a person who gave his clothes as collateral for a loan was to have it given back before sunset so that he would have cover during the night; interest was not to be charged on loans to other Israelites; and the use of dishonest scale weights was forbidden.

While the most blatant sin of the Israelites is oppression of the poor, God also hates the corruption of justice and immorality. For Amos, these were not just sins against people who could not fight back: they were sins against the very command and nature of God.

It is possible that the reference to 'a man and his father' profaning God's holy name is referring to temple prostitution. However, the word used is the regular word for girl or maiden, so some interpreters see this as another example of oppression of the poor. Under this understanding, the girl had been sold into slavery because of the poverty of her family. The owner and his son both used her as a concubine, a practice that was prohibited in the law of Israel.

Overall, Amos seems to be preaching against a combination of moral and religious sins. Wealthy nobles cheated the helpless poor out of their property and livelihood, and then indulged themselves in vulgar, corrupt religious practices. Amos condemned publicly the corrupt practices of the economic, political and religious leaders who robbed and manipulated the helpless poor or made it possible for others to do so. He saw these practices as profaning the name of God and as lethal threats to the covenant society.

7 Amos: Chapter 2 – Application Questions

1. Judah was condemned because they ignored the teachings of the prophets and worshipped idols. Many people today believe that our society has abandoned the teachings of the Bible and worships everything EXCEPT God. What do you think?
2. Amos makes it clear that God will not tolerate those who take advantage of the poor and needy, though he might give them a long time before punishment. America has a long tradition of self-reliance, which has led in some ways to looking down on those who cannot care for themselves. How do we reconcile God's demands with our national heritage of self-reliance?
3. Amos blasted governments and individuals alike for their failure to live up to God's standards and covenants. Over the last few weeks we have seen many examples of individuals and government groups who are reaching out to help those affected by water, wind and fire. Does God expect both, or is one more important than the other?
4. Amos talks about nations as a whole rather than calling on individual people. If God is planning to punish nations/governments for sin, what do you think this means about the way he looks at individual people? Might God hold me responsible for the sins of my government?

8 Amos: Chapter 3 – Scripture Questions

1. Who was the Lord speaking against? (vs. 1)
2. Why was the Lord going to punish them for all their sins? (vs. 2)
3. In Amos' list of questions, what examples does he give of cause and effect? (vs. 3-6)
4. What happens BEFORE the Lord performs an act of judgment? (vs. 7)
5. Does Amos have any option about prophesying? (vs. 8)
6. What does God call on Assyria and Egypt to do? (vs. 9)
7. How does the Lord God accuse the nation of Israel? (vs. 10)
8. What kind of destruction would come upon Israel? (vs. 11, 12)
9. How would the religious center of Bethel (and the altar there) be affected? (vs. 14)
10. What would happen to the houses of the wealthy? (vs. 15)

Amos: Chapter 3– Summary

Amos and his listeners agreed on some things. They agreed that God was ruler over all the nations. They both looked forward to the “Day of the Lord”. However, they disagreed about what that Day would be like. They believed that God had chosen Israel as his specific people. The word translated as ‘known’ isn’t about recognition but is used instead to describe a relationship. However, there was a big difference between their conclusions. Most of the people of Israel seemed to feel that since God had chosen them he must love them more than anyone else; therefore they could count on more of God’s blessings, and they would miss all the judgments. Israel believed that the benefits of being chosen and being in a special relationship with God were automatic, and that they would automatically be forgiven of any guilt from sin. Amos says instead that privilege makes responsibility more important. There was no license to sin, or protection from judgment.

In verses 3-8, Amos asks a series of questions about the relationship of cause and effect. These questions were not meant to be answered, but were meant to point out that prophets acted as messengers for God. The bulk of their messages were related to the announcement of judgment. This was in contrast to gods of Israel’s neighbors, who were thought to bring evil on their peoples unannounced and for no legitimate reason.

Verses 9-15 have one thing in common: judgment. Amos calls for the leaders of pagan powers to come to Samaria (the capital of the nation of Israel) and see how morally and spiritually degraded the nation is. Amos was saying that Israel’s pagan neighbors knew more about basic morality than God’s chosen people. Amos also declares that the people had lost their way, their sense of direction toward righteousness. After they are overrun with invaders, the only things left to rescue will be broken bits of the country. Even Bethel, the religious capital, and the luxurious houses of the wealthy would be destroyed. The ‘horns of the altar’ were traditionally a place of refuge: Amos says that there would be no more refuge.

The most devastating charge is the one that the people have lost the knowledge of how to do right. There is a point when disobedience results in the inability to obey. If people WILL NOT do right, the time comes when they CANNOT do right.

Amos: Chapter 3—Application Questions

1. Israel was wrong about the covenant between them and God: as a nation, they were destroyed because they were disobedient and sinful. We believe that our relationship with God (after Jesus) is a one-to-one relationship. Is it possible to suffer judgment while still keeping our salvation? Or does judgment only come after deliberate rejection of God?
2. Amos felt compelled to give out the word of God that he had received. Is there anything you feel compelled to tell others about Jesus? What about ‘street corner’ preachers? Should we take them more seriously, since they obviously feel compelled to speak? Do you think the prophets like Amos were the street corner preachers of their day?
3. The people of Israel evidently were unable to see how they had become morally and spiritually corrupted. How do we avoid this kind of blindness in our own lives?
4. The people of Israel were into conspicuous wealth and had winter homes, summer homes, and mansions. We know that some wealthy people are very godly and generous, and some are greedy and showy. What is the lesson for us here?

11 Amos: Chapter 4 – Scripture Questions

1. What did Amos call the rich women of Samaria? (vs. 1)
2. What was going to happen to the women? (vs. 2, 3)
3. These people were doing religious activities, but were still sinning. What were the actions? (vs. 4, 5)
4. How did the people react to famine? (vs. 6)
5. Was lack of rain enough to make the people return to God? (vs. 7, 8)
6. What did God use to destroy the gardens, vineyards and orchards? (vs. 9)
7. How were the people affected by plagues and warfare? (vs. 10)
8. What is the last physical warning that was sent to the Israelites? (vs. 11)
9. Finally, what was the judgment to come? (vs. 12)
10. How does Amos describe God's majesty, and emphasize His authority? (vs. 13)

Amos: Chapter 4 – Summary

Amos considered the wealthy women of Samaria (the capital city of Israel) to be insensitive, coarse, and indulgent. He called them ‘fat cows of Bashan’, comparing them to farm animals that were sleek, fat and well groomed (think State Fair competitions!). Their husbands (lords) were the ones storing up violence by oppressing the poor. These women were apparently egging them on in order to satisfy their insatiable desires. The phrase ‘taken away with hooks’ is either describing how the women will be taken away as captives, chained together, or that they would be dragged away as corpses. Ironically, Harmon (possibly Hermon) is in the region of Bashan. Amos says in effect that these rich women who treated the poor as if they were cattle will in the end be treated like the cattle they are.

We mustn’t assume from Amos’ fierce denunciation of the people that he was someone who rejected material blessings in and of themselves. He believed, like most of the people, that God had created the world and stocked it with good things. It was more that he was condemning selfish indulgence which flaunted itself in the face of poverty and at the expense of its victims. Amos opposed plenty which came from oppression and treachery towards those who suffered starvation.

We have the idea that greedy, calloused, secure people are not interested in worship. This was not the case in Amos time. The people he condemned were regular in their attendance at worship services and lavish in their gifts and support of the religious establishment. Amos is bitingly sarcastic and ironic as he attacks their worship. Bethel was the major worship center in Israel (Jerusalem was the center for the Southern Kingdom of Judah.) Amos mentions four kinds of ritual observances: the sacrifice, tithe, thank offering, and freewill offering. The mention of leavened bread is significant, since unleavened bread was specified. They were using an expensive ingredient as another way to make themselves look good. Amos’ anger was not aimed at the rituals themselves or the ingredients. He was against the idea that simply performing the rituals and using expensive ingredients automatically gave them the favor of God.

Famine, drought, mildew, locusts, pestilence, war, and earthquake: all these were rather common in Israel. The list of calamities Amos speaks of can either be a reminder of actual events or a promise of fulfilled curses. Either way, Amos considers the people to be amply warned of God’s coming plan of action—unless they repent. They are told to ‘prepare to meet your God’, who was coming to call His people to account for their wrongdoings.

13 Amos: Chapter 4 – Application Questions

1. Ancient prophets seemed to believe that women were largely responsible for the quality of civilization. If the women were cruel or careless, the men would be unrestrained and the nation would fall. What do you think? Are women more able to affect the quality and nature of a culture or nation? If so, what kind of effect do you think women are having today in our world?
2. The idea that people can look extremely religious on the outside and be sinful on the inside is a little unsettling. Jesus warned against those who were ‘like whitewashed tombs, clean on the outside but full of dead men’s bones’. As we know, most of the financial support of churches comes from people who have disposable income. Should we just take the money and look the other way? If we find out these big givers are actually bad people, should their money be returned to them?
3. How concerned should we be about the string of natural disasters that have occurred within the last ten years? We don’t like to attribute deliberate intent to these kind of events, but Amos certainly considered God capable of sending them as warnings. What if they ARE warnings to the world? What should we do?

14 Amos: Chapter 5 – Scripture Questions

1. In his word of sorrow over Israel, what does Amos say would be left in the nation of Israel? (vs. 1-3)
2. What were the Israelites warned to do? What were they warned not to do? (vs. 4-6)
3. Some people turned justice into _____ and cast righteousness to the _____. (vs. 7)
4. In the second of three hymn fragments, how does Amos speak of God? (vs. 8, 9)
5. In the next few verses, Amos specifically names several types of people who have brought destruction on the nation of Israel: (vs. 10, 11)
 1. Those who hate people that uphold justice in the _____.
 2. Those who hate people who tell the _____ in court.
 3. Those who impose crushing _____ burdens on the poor.
 4. Those who oppress the _____, taking bribes and depriving the poor of _____ in court.
6. Is there any way that Amos' listeners could be saved? (vs. 14, 15)
7. Does it seem likely that the listeners WILL be saved? (vs. 16, 17)
8. How does Amos describe the difference between what Israel THINKS will happen and what it will really be like in the day of the Lord? (vs. 18-20)
9. The Israelites kept all the rituals carefully. What did God think of these rituals? (vs. 21-23)
10. What did God truly desire from his people? (vs. 24)

Amos: Chapter 5 – Summary

Amos has methodically stripped away all of Israel's false hopes about themselves and their nations. In chapter 3, he took away any comfort they might have had in the doctrine of election (being specifically chosen by God). In chapter 4, he took away the grounds for security caused by their attention to sacrifice and religious rituals. In this chapter, Amos makes it clear that there is no hope in their future—it is simply too late.

The beginning verses are in the form of a professional mourning song, a lament. Some scholars have speculated that Amos actually dressed in the costume of a professional mourner and sang this song in Samaria or Bethel. If true, it means that Amos was the first prophet to dramatize his message, though this was more common later on (with Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah).

We are familiar with the phrase “seek God”, but it meant something different to Amos’ listeners. They were accustomed to go to a sanctuary, priest, or prophet, to give a sacrifice, and then to be given God’s word. However, Amos tells them not to seek God in this way. It was their belief that all God wanted from men was the observance of religious rituals. Amos believed the opposite: if a person’s life was not marked by justice, righteousness, and goodness, it didn’t matter how many religious festivals one attended or how large the tithes and offerings might be. True seeking of God was an inward rather than an outward process. “Seek God and live” was aimed at not just outward obedience but inner motivation and focus.

The word ‘justice’ as used by Amos referred to legal justice, which would be handed out in the legal assembly of the cities. In ancient Israel every village was more or less free to run its own affairs—at least in minor disputes among the citizens. Each village had two kinds of people, full citizens and everyone else. The full citizens were free men. They could own property, speak in legal assemblies, and exercise the right to be heard. It worked fairly well when there was a general evenness of power. However, when some became rich (at the expense of others) the system failed. The fault was not just with those who felt they could buy judgments in their favor, but with those who accepted the bribes. This showed that the society itself, down to even the village hearings, had become corrupted.

Amos: Chapter 5 – Application Questions

1. The nation of Israel considered itself to be founded by God, supported by Him, and favored by Him. This sounds uncomfortably close to what many Christians say today about America. Do you think God cares what kind of government we have? If yes, how active should we be in running it? If no, how far should we distance ourselves from politics?
2. Amos speaks more than once about God's power, His ability to affect the natural universe. Where is this power today? Does God ever use His power in visible ways? Does God still control nature? If so, where and when?
3. The way the people worshipped was so wrong (in heart, if not in execution) that God said he hated and despised their worship. How can we know if our worship is what God desires?
4. Worship can be pleasing to God or hateful to God. What makes worship pleasing or hateful to Him?

Amos: Chapter 6 – Scripture Questions

1. Upon whom does Amos call down the first woe? (vs. 1)
2. What were these foolish leaders doing? (vs. 3)
3. How were the leaders indulging themselves? (vs. 4-6)
4. Where would these people be in the chain of those going into exile? (vs. 7)
5. How did the Lord God feel about the pride of the nation of Israel? What was their fate? (vs. 8)
6. What would happen to all the homes, whether great or small? (vs. 11)
7. How had the leaders subverted the proper order of things (justice and righteousness) as demanded by God? (vs. 12)
8. Who did the leaders believe was responsible for their military success? (vs. 13)
9. How far would the destruction reach? (vs. 14)c

Amos: Chapter 6 – Summary

This passage contains a description of the affluent society of Amos' day. He describes the rich and powerful, to whom the peasants of Israel must come for permission to do anything. They have beautiful furniture while the poor slept on the ground. They ate only the best meats, sang songs, drank wine out of bowls, but were not concerned in any way about the brokenness of their nation. They were wholly untroubled by their times.

One reason they didn't care was that they felt secure: in the religious importance of Zion (God's chosen city) and the military strength of Samaria. Because they misunderstood the terms of the covenant between them and God, they thought God would make sure Jerusalem was spared regardless of what they did or how they lived. Samaria was a natural fortress, located in a place that was defensible against all invasion—or so they thought.

The 'notable' men were men of distinction, who had achieved their wealth and place in society by unfair business practices, bribery, and corrupting the courts. They had gained so much control that anyone who needed to do business or get justice had to go through them. They, not the king, were the true power structure. Amos was not condemning wealth as such, but the abuse and oppression of the poor by the rich. And these leaders didn't care about the result of their sins. They had forgotten how to do right and were bringing violence upon themselves and all their people.

Verses 8-14 describe the certainty, extent, and nature of the judgment to come. Pride in their own strength replaced Yahweh as the grounds for the nation's well-being. God was going to hand over the city (probably Samaria, the capital) with all the pomp, people, and provisions, to an enemy invader. Destruction will be complete, and it will fall on everyone, palaces and hovels.

The extent of the destruction would be complete. 'The entrance of Hamath' marked the northernmost limits of Solomon's and Jeroboam's kingdom. 'The Brook of the Arabah' is most likely a reference to the Brook Zered at the south end of the Dead Sea. (In the USA we would say "from Alaska to Mexico".) So Amos was describing the entire territory from the northern to the southern limits, and it would all be wasted by an intruder.

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Amos: Chapter 6 – Application Questions

1. Amos seems to believe that people who have more money than they need for survival—what we might call “comfortable”—are more likely to put themselves first. What do you think? Is having enough money to be financially secure a barrier to dependence on God? If not, why not?
2. Does being poor make it easier or harder to push for justice and righteousness? Is being poor a virtue? Does being poor make it difficult to avoid envy?
3. Amos condemns those who are “untroubled by their times”. A lot of people nowadays are VERY troubled by their times but feel helpless to do anything to change the times. Should our focus be on spiritual changes that are needed or social changes? Why?
4. Which do you think is more effective: calling out sin and brokenness, or highlighting goodness and effective neighborly love? Why?

20 Amos: Chapter 7 – Scripture Questions

1. In Amos' vision, what would attack the king's share of the harvest? (vs. 1)
2. When Amos asked the Lord to forgive, what did the Lord do? (vs. 3)
3. What was the next form of judgement that Amos saw in his vision? (vs. 4)
4. When the Lord relented, what did he say to Amos? (vs. 6)
5. In his vision, what did Amos see the Lord holding next to a wall? (vs. 7-8)
6. What did the Lord say would happen to the high places and sanctuaries? (vs. 9)
7. Who sent a message to King Jeroboam about Amos? What did the message say? (vs. 10)
8. Where did Amaziah tell Amos to go? (vs. 12)
9. Amos said he was neither a prophet nor the son of a _____. (vs. 14)
10. Amos prophesied that Amaziah's sons and daughters would _____ by the sword. (vs. 17)

Amos: Chapter 7 – Summary

This chapter tells of Amos' first vision and its interpretation.

Amos saw the land of Israel being stripped clean by locusts just as the final harvest was ready in the fields. He pleaded with God and the Lord decided not to let it happen.

Amos saw fire falling on the land and devouring everything. Again, God relented when Amos begged God to forgive.

But God held a plumb line up to a wall, saying he was measuring the nation. A plumb line is a carpenter's tool that has a string with a weight on the end. It shows if a wall is perfectly upright. The meaning is that God measured the nation of Israel and found they were NOT upright.

Amaziah, the priest at Bethel, told the king that Amos was conspiring against him. Then he told Amos to leave and go back to the south (Judah)

Amos told Amaziah that:

1. His wife would be reduced to prostitution
2. His sons and daughters would fall by the sword
3. His property would be taken away and divided up
4. Amaziah would be carried off and die in a pagan country
5. Israel would be sent into exile

Amos: Chapter 7 – Application Questions

1. Sometimes it seems that God's judgement can be changed through requests by his people. When do you think God is willing to change his plans?

2. God measures his people against a standard (a plumb line in this case) to see if they are upright and righteous. What does God measure us against now? How do we stack up? Why?

3. Like the high priest Amaziah, sometimes religious leaders are too invested in telling the people in charge what they want to hear. When should religious leaders "go along to get along" and when should they "tell it like it is"? Why?

4. Amos didn't make any friends by telling his prophesies. Is it really necessary to make enemies of everyone in order to tell the truth?

23 Amos: Chapter 8 – Scripture Questions

1. In Amos' next vision, what did God show to Amos? (v. 1)
2. What did God tell Amos the basket meant? (v. 2)
3. What would happen on that terrible day? (v.3)
4. What were the dishonest merchants of Israel doing to cheat people? (v.5)
5. What was the 'price' of the poor and needy? (v. 6)

On the terrible day of the Lord, what would happen...

6. To the sun? (v. 9)
 7. To the earth? (v. 9)
 8. To singing? (v. 10)
 9. To their hair? (v. 10)
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10. What kind of famine would they face? (v. 11)
 11. What would happen to the young women and men (v. 13)?

Amos: Chapter 8 – Summary

This chapter tells of Amos' next vision and its interpretation.

Amos saw a basket of ripe fruit that the Lord said represented that the time was ripe for His people – he would spare them no longer

Consequences:

- Songs would turn to wailing
- Death and bodies would be everywhere, silence

Because:

- They had trampled the needy
- Done away with the poor
- Only been concerned about cheating, boosting the price, skimping on weights
- Buying and selling the poor for as little as a pair of shoes
- Adding dirt to wheat to add weight

The Day of the Lord:

- Sun will go down at noon
- Festivals turn to mourning, songs to weeping
- Sackcloth and shaved heads
- Like the death of your only child
- Famine of the word of God
- The young men and women would faint from thirst

Amos: Chapter 8 – Application Questions

1. The Lord told Amos that ‘the time is ripe’. Sometimes things reach a tipping point and there is no going back. Have you ever seen that happen in your family, friends, community or nation? When?
2. What does it mean to ‘trample the needy’? Does it mean cheating them, raising prices, reducing / increasing welfare, running them off, keeping them out, moving them elsewhere, something else entirely, all of the above, or none of the above?
3. Have you ever felt like the sun had gone dark at noon? What does that feel like? What has gone wrong when things feel like that?
4. What would it be like if there were a famine ‘of hearing the words of the Lord’? Do we have that now in some ways? Why or why not?

26 Amos: Chapter 9 – Scripture Questions

1. After the earthquake, how would the last remaining people die? (vs. 1)
2. There was no place to hide: even if they dig into _____, climb up to _____, or the top of _____, at the bottom of the _____, or even if they go into _____. (vs. 3, 4)
3. Amos inserts a song of praise for the Lord God. (vs. 5, 6)
 1. He touches the earth and it _____
 2. He builds his upper chambers in the _____
 3. He calls for the waters of the sea and _____ them out
5. What promise is spoken of, after saying that the Lord God will destroy the sinful kingdom from the surface of the ground? (vs. 8)
6. How would the nation be shaken? (vs. 9)
7. What would the sinners (pebbles) say, which would make certain their death? (vs. 10)
8. Since God does not leave men hopeless, what will come in the day after the “sifting”? (vs. 11, 12)
9. How will the natural world respond to the return of the remnant? (vs. 13)
10. What is the final resting place of the faithful? (vs. 15)

Amos: Chapter 9 – Summary

Amos' visions must have had a tremendous effect on him. They describe personal encounters with his God, which must have given him confidence and insight that came in no other way. He had been in the council of God, and God had revealed His secret to Amos. Though Amos announced the fall of Israel, he had a deep and abiding faith in the future because he had had a personal encounter with God.

It was usual to encounter God at the altar. What was unusual was that the word which came from the altar would be a curse. Amos had called his listeners to "seek good, and not evil", but they had refused. Now, their reward was the evil which they had chosen.

The section beginning "Are you not like the Ethiopians to me" is a bit confusing, but the gist of it seems to be that because of their sin, the covenant between the Lord and Israel is broken. Now, they are just like every other nation in the eyes of the Lord. It doesn't mean that God will have nothing else to do with Israel, but that there will be no more special privileges. When the people sin, they will be punished. All men are equal in his sight, and he is sovereign over all.

Many scholars think that the last few verses, 8b-15, were written by someone else. They believe that a later editor modified Amos' message so that it applied only to the sinners and scoffers in Israel. The phrase "I will not utterly destroy" could simply mean that the 'house of Jacob' referred to the whole nation of Israel, not just the Northern Kingdom.

The last verse looks toward a time of stability and security. It puts forth the final conviction that in the end the purpose of God will be accomplished in the earth, and the relationships between man and God and the world will be restored.

Amos: Chapter 9 – Application Questions

1. What do you think a prophetic ‘vision’ is? Have you ever had one? How is a vision different than a dream?

2. In Amos’ vision, God has made it clear that the nation is doomed. Some people think our nation is doomed, too. What do you think? Is there anything that can be done, or should we just hunker down and wait?

3. The writer speaks of a ‘sifting’ process, by which the sinful kingdom will be destroyed. What do you think of the idea that bad times can be a good way to get rid of bad people? For example: a time of struggle in a congregation can force out those who are not wholly committed to the church. True or False? Why?

4. The end of the book may not have been written by Amos, but added later to make it more hopeful. Is it helpful or harmful to give stern warnings about the limit of God’s patience?