

Unseal the Indictment!
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Amos 1:1-2; 2:6-8; 3:6-8; 3:13-15

Opening Question: When have you felt unqualified to do something for God but you did it anyway? How did you get past the fear? Amos had to face those kinds of feelings.

The book of Amos is the next in our study of some of the minor prophets. Let's learn a little bit about this prophecy. Look at the first two verses of chapter 1.

Amos 1:1–2 (ESV)

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

Judgment on Israel's Neighbors

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.”

- Verse 1 tells us these are the “words of Amos”... “which he saw” concerning Israel.
- **So, these aren't really Amos' words...where did he get them? So he's a...?**
- An unlikely prophet. **What did Amos do for a living? Where was he from?**
- Turn over to Amos 7:14-15. Someone read Amos' own description of who he was.

Amos 7:14–15 (ESV)

14 Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, “I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. 15 But the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”

- A herdsman and dresser of figs could have been either a poor “hired hand” who didn't own the sheep or the fig trees; or he could have had his own ranch and grove.
- **Either way, what does this tell us about Amos as a candidate for prophet?**
- **How could you and I be encouraged by the example of Amos' calling?**
- What is the book all about? The end of verse 1 gives a clue. What would happen two years later? Then look at verse 2. **What do you think it's describing?**
- Amos says “the Lord roars”...later in Chapter 3 verse 8 we'll see he's comparing God's judgement to the roar of a lion.
- Verse 2: “...the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers.”
- **Why would shepherds mourn about their pastures?**
- Mt. Carmel was such a lush and fertile place, no one could imagine it trying up and “withering” even in a drought. Yet, this is exactly what Amos is prophesying.

- **Does anyone have a study Bible with an introduction to Amos? What does it say the THEME of this book is?**

ESV Study Bible: *The theme of Amos is the universal justice of God. The Israelites clearly expected a 'day of the Lord' when all of their enemies would be judged. What they were not prepared for was that the judgement of that day would fall on them as well. Instead of enjoying favored status, they would be held more accountable than their neighbors.* (Emphasis mine)

After a time of war, this was a time of peace and prosperity in the lands of both Judah and the Northern Kingdom.

An economic explosion accompanied the military success... Israel now controlled ancient trade routes, and expansion gave rise to a new social class of wealthy merchants. Wealth created a demand for the many luxuries available from all over the known world.

Pressured by the influx of wealth, jolting social changes took place. The population began to shift from farms to cities and towns. Class distinctions crystallized, with the rich bent on piling up profits at the expense of their poorer brothers. Exorbitant prices were charged; poor farmers were dispossessed so that the rich might build up great estates. A heartless unconcern for the sufferings of the oppressed marked the well-to-do.
(Teacher's Commentary)

- Post-war prosperity led to a luxurious lifestyle. Does that scenario sound familiar?
- **What would you compare that to in our lifetime?**
- **What can prosperity lead to in our relationship with God?**
- Jewish theology: Prosperity meant that God was pleased. Mistaken assumption.
- Back to chapter 1. We're gonna skim through the rest of this chapter quickly.
- This rough-around-the-edges shepherd shows up in Jerusalem and begins to preach.
- He preaches judgement on the enemies of the Northern Kingdom.
- Over and over he says the same thing. Look at verse 3: *Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,*
- This nation just keeps committing sin after sin but now it's coming to an end.
- God is long-suffering with sinners but eventually his patience runs out.
- Amos pronounces JUDGEMENT on six enemy nations around the Northern Kingdom.
- Damascus was condemned for war atrocities.
- The Philistines were guilty of slave trade.
- The Phoenicians enslaved an entire population to Edom violating a sacred treaty.
- Edom, more slave trade and hatred toward Israel with whom THEY had a treaty.
- The Ammonites also expanded their territory "at the expense of Israel" even trying to wipe out the entire male population...even killing babies in the wombs of mothers.
- Hit the pause button. Hating Israel. Taking the land of Israel. Killing babies in the womb. Sound familiar?
- The Moabites burned the bones of the king of Edom. Desecrating the body of a king.
- Six enemy countries and Amos is pronouncing God's coming judgement.
- **How do you think the crowd responded? How do you respond when enemies are criticized? How about when you are criticized?**

- Amos shifts gears and gets somewhat close to home.
- Judah. Guilty because “They have rejected the law of Yahweh and did not keep his statutes.” and “idol worship.” Hmm...now he’s prophesying against Jews.
- Then Amos “stops preaching and goes to meddling” as the saying goes.
- He turns his “guns” on the Northern Kingdom themselves.

Amos 2:6–8 (ESV)

Judgment on Israel

6 Thus says the Lord:

“For three transgressions of Israel,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they sell the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of sandals—

7 those who 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.

- Look at these verses and let’s try to pick out the sins he’s condemning.
- **Verses 6 & first part of 7 what’s the sin?** Sell the righteous for silver...the needy for sandals. Covetousness - Taking advantage of the poor in the courts by bribing judges.
- The rest of verse 7, “a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned;” **Any idea what this means?** Immorality - Shrine prostitutes, under the guise of worship.
- Verse 8 points out Heartlessness toward the poor. Jewish law said if someone pawned their cloak you had to give it back before sundown when it got cold. They were keeping the cloaks and sleeping around on them in the shrine to Baal.
- Corrupt judges would place “fines” on wrongly accused poor people who paid in wine.
- Then the wine was taken was taken to the temples where they got drunk while SUPPOSEDLY worshipping God.
- Greed; mistreatment of the poor; sexual immorality and drunkenness in the name of worship.
- Prosperity drove the Israelites away from God and into cruelty and perversion.
- Amos gives the warning...

Amos 3:6–8 (ESV)

6 Is a trumpet blown in a city,
and the people are not afraid?

Does disaster come to a city,
unless the Lord has done it?

7 “For the Lord God does nothing
without revealing his secret

to his servants the prophets.

8 The lion has roared;
who will not fear?

The Lord God has spoken;
who can but prophesy?"

- Jump to verse 13...

Amos 3:13–15 (ESV)

13 "Hear, and testify against the house of Jacob,"
declares the Lord God, the God of hosts,

14 "that on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions,
I will punish the altars of Bethel,
and the horns of the altar shall be cut off
and fall to the ground.

15 I will strike the winter house along with the summer house,
and the houses of ivory shall perish,
and the great houses shall come to an end,"
declares the Lord.

- How does all this apply to us today? Let's look both EXTERNALLY and INTERNALLY.
- **Question: What overall mind-set do you think led to a culture where these sins were so widespread? Do you think it happened suddenly? How did it happen?**
- **If the Lord were listing the charges against our society today, what would you expect to see on the list? What should be our response to that as followers of Christ?**
- Let's look INTERNALLY. It would be easy to get "SMUG" and say "*I'm glad I'm not like those evil, perverted, cruel Israelites in that day!*"
- Rhetorical question (don't answer): What is going on in my heart and life and your heart and life that we'd be embarrassed if a prophet got up in church today and called us out in public? What if Johnny announced, "We've installed a high-tech sin detector that will reveal on the screens the sins of anyone we put the camera on...watch the screens!"
- **Question (please DO answer): How can you and I respond to our sin in ways the Israelites did not?**

So, What's The Takeaway?

- The Lord wants His people to live in ways that show respect to Him and compassion to others. No sin escapes God's notice, no matter how we may try to hide or justify our actions. As believers, we acknowledge our guilt while placing our trust in Jesus Christ.
- **Is there anyone you or I have treated unjustly because of selfish choices we've made? What steps will we take to correct those situations?**
- **Are there sinful attitudes or actions you or I are trying to ignore or hide from God? Will we confess them and ask for His help in living with righteousness and integrity?**

- **If we knew the Lord was coming tomorrow in judgment, what changes would we make? How would we live if you truly believed Christ could return at any moment?** Because...He will.
- Will our lifestyle pass muster when the “Lion” of judgement roars?