

# AMOS

## "Prepare to meet your God"

Amos served God as a prophet in the 8th century B.C. (about 760-750 B.C.E.) during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel. This was a time of great prosperity and material success for both kingdoms. Under Uzziah Judah had grown large and powerful, rivaling the days of David and Solomon (see 2 Chron. 26 and 2 Kings 15<sup>1</sup>). During much of his reign Uzziah was a godly man, but Chronicles tells us that he fell victim to pride and eventually was stricken with leprosy and withdrew from public life. Jeroboam II in Israel had also been a very successful king. He is characterized as an evil man who promoted calf worship (see 2 Kings 14:23ff) but was nevertheless God's instrument for saving Israel. Jeroboam, like Uzziah, led his people during a time of territorial expansion, military success, and prosperity.

Other prophets ministering at about the same time as Amos included Jonah, Hosea, and a young Isaiah. Jonah and Hosea, like Amos, were primarily prophets to Israel (Samaria, the northern kingdom) while Isaiah was primarily a prophet of Judah (Jerusalem, the southern kingdom).

Amos' message is a warning of judgment against the wealthy, powerful, and unconcerned upper class of Israel. It was not a popular message, but Amos could not back away from what God had told him to do and say. He was not a professional or a volunteer, but rather a conscript (Amos 7:14-15). Amos issues the ominous warning, "prepare to meet your God," (Amos 4:12) because in the midst of their apparent success and prosperity they had forgotten who their God was.

Read Amos 1:1-2 the prophet and his message.

What was Amos' actual profession?

How do you think Amos would have looked and sounded to the wealthy and the rulers he especially had a message for?

How did he get his message?

When did he get his message<sup>2</sup>?

Who was his message about?

What was his vision of the LORD?

Read Amos 1:3,6,9,11,13, 2:1,4,6 many sins of many people.

Amos had a prophecy about Israel, but what did he tell of first?

Why do you think it made sense for Amos to mention the sins of 7 other nations, including his own home of Judah, before discussing the sins of Israel-who he was talking to?

Why do you think Amos used the formula "for three sins... even for four?"

What kinds of sins were mentioned in these prophecies against the kingdoms and nations around Israel?

Read Amos 3:1-3 a chosen people.

What had God done for Israel in vv 1-2?

What did God think of Israel as?

Were God and Israel walking together? Why or why not?

What has to happen for anyone to walk with God?

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<sup>1</sup>Uzziah is also known as Azariah.

<sup>2</sup>Note that "the earthquake" is probably also referred to in 8:8, 9:1, and 9:5 and had been predicted by Amos as a sign of God's coming judgment if Israel did not repent.

Read Amos 3:7-8 why a prophet prophesies.

What does God have—and reveal—for mankind?

How has God revealed his plan?

Why did Amos prophesy?

Does this sound like Amos volunteered to be a prophet, or really wanted to be? Explain what Amos seemed to feel about being a prophet.

How should you or I feel about prophesying—telling what the LORD has spoken?

Read Amos 3:12-15 bits and pieces.

How did the LORD relate Amos' experience as a shepherd to the coming experience of Israel?

What people was God saying would be chewed up?

What two kinds of things did God promise to destroy in Israel?

What do you suppose the problem was with the houses described in these verses? Or was it the houses?

Read Amos 4:1-3 cows of Bashan.

Who did Amos refer to as cows?

Why did Amos use this insulting language?

Describe the lifestyle pictured in these verses and those at the end of chapter 3.

What would happen to the selfish, wealthy and indolent women of Israel?

Read Amos 4:6-8 hard times.

Had everything been good in Israel?

What were some of the troubles the people of the land had experienced?

What did God want the troubles to accomplish?

Did they?

Read Amos 4:12-13 get ready.

Since Israel had not returned to God, what should they do now?

Does this warning mean anything today? Explain.

Who is the God Amos was talking about?

What are the five things God does in this list?

Read Amos 5:4-6 how to live.

Was it too late for Israel?

What did they need to do?

Was it some place they needed to go, some ritual they needed to perform? Explain.

Read Amos 5:21-24 useless religion.

How did God feel about Israel's religious practices?

Why?

What did he really want for them or from them?

Read Amos 6:1-7 complacent men.

What was the attitude of the powerful men of Israel?

How did God feel about that attitude?

What was the lifestyle of these people?

What were they missing or failing to notice?

What would happen to the notable men of Israel?

Read Amos 7:1-9 leniency.

What did the LORD first show Amos? (1-3)  
How did Amos feel about this?  
What did he do?  
What did the LORD do because of Amos' plea?  
What did the LORD next show Amos? (4-6)  
Again, how did Amos respond?  
And again, how did the LORD react to Amos' request?  
What did the LORD finally show Amos?  
What was the LORD showing Amos with the plumb line—why can't he just relent forever?  
Amos was from Judah, not Israel. What does this set of verses tell us about the character of Amos?  
What does this set of verses tell us about prayer and God's answer to it?

Read Amos 7:10-17 conflict and condemnation.

What was Amos accused of?  
Who made the accusation?  
Notice the last phrase of verse 9 and the first phrase of Amaziah's quote in verse 11: Was Amaziah quoting Amos accurately?  
How might a slight misquotation have served Amaziah's purpose?  
What did Amaziah want Amos to do?  
Who did Amaziah say the sanctuary and temple at Bethel belonged to? (13)  
Who do you think Amaziah was really trying to protect?  
What did Amos explain about himself? (14-15)  
Why was Amos prophesying in Israel?  
What did Amos say would prove the LORD had called him, and prove Amaziah to be a fraud?

Read Amos 8:1-6 the time is ripe.

What did God show Amos?  
What was the lesson of this vision?  
When does God bring judgment?  
Why do you think God wanted Amos to understand that judgment had to come?  
What would happen to the temple and worship at Bethel?  
What kind of people was it Amos was prophesying against?  
What was the truth about their attitude toward the Law?  
What was the attitude toward other people that compelled judgment?

Read Amos 9:11-15 hope for the future.

Despite all the warnings of Amos, what kind of future did God plan for his people?  
Would this be only for Jews? (12)  
When God plants Israel in their land, when will they again lose it?  
Since the promise included "all the nations that bear my name," do you think this promise is about the Jewish return from exile or the kingdom of heaven?

Remember that Amos was a shepherd and fruit harvester from Tekoa in Judea. God called him to prophesy to Israel, and he went and said what God wanted him to say. His message was not popular, and he was viewed as an outsider and a trouble maker. In spite of this, and in spite of knowing how bad many Israelites were, Amos longed to see Israel salvaged, to put off judgment until the people might turn. God chose to show Amos that standards are necessary and that the time had come when judgment must occur – ripe fruit soon rots. The courage of Amos, a country shepherd taking on the wealthy and powerful of Israel, reminds us that whoever we are, we can speak the truth and stand for what is right. Amos stood with God, and so can we. You don't have to be a "professional" to say what needs saying or do what needs doing. Amos' compassion reminds us that people matter, that even people who are very bad need to be taught and prayed for.