

Amos

Purpose: Judah should learn that judgment is coming against Judah unless repentance takes place.

Outline: 1:1 – Title

1:2-3:8 – God’s people judged with the nations

3:9-6:14 – Announcements against God’s people

7:1-9:10 – Visions against God’s people

9:11-15 – God’s people blessed above the nations

Author: Amos and/or his students

Date: The main part of Amos’ ministry was 760-750 BC, around the same time as Jonah and Hosea.

Highlights:

{NOTE: in the notes below words that are *bold & italicized* are the literary terms used when discussing the prophets.}

Amos ministered during the reign of Jeroboam (in the Northern Kingdom of Israel) and Uzziah (in the Southern Kingdom of Judah). He was a shepherd from Judah, who ministered in Israel. However, this book of Amos was written for Judah.

Following the title is an important series of judgments made by God on all nations – including Judah and Israel. Two items to help you understand this section (1:2-3:8):

(1) There are 8 nations that are mentioned by name – 6 foreign nations, Judah, and Israel. If you were to plot the nations on a map you would see an interesting pattern ---- from Damascus/Syria (northwest), to Gaza/Philistia (southeast), then to Tyre (northeast), and then to Edom (southwest); then to Ammon (northwest) and then to Moab (southwest). You would expect the pattern to continue with judgments against Israel (northeast) and then Judah (southeast). Instead, the order is reversed for God’s people, which places greater emphasis on their judgment – especially Israel (where Amos was originally ministering). Israel & Judah would have been shocked to be on this list in the first place, but to be emphasized was very disturbing.

(2) There is a distinct pattern for each judgment. There is a refrain “For three sins of...even for four, I will not turn back my wrath” (= for several sins). This is followed by a specific *accusation* (eg. “Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom”). This is followed by one or more phrases, which contain the judicial *sentences* based on the accusation (e.g. “I will send fire upon the walls of Gaza that will consume her fortresses”). NOTE: the extreme judgment on Israel is accentuated by extended accusations (2:6-8) a reminder of the *benevolences* of God on behalf of Israel (2:9-11), and then after a last accusation (2:12) there are many *sentences of judgment* (2:13-16).

The series of accusations and sentences is concluded by final explanations and conclusions (3:3-6), which justify the judgment oracles of God.

Note that the accusations are not against cultic, dietary, or ritualistic sins; but for “real” sins regarding justice, human dignity, and violations against God’s people.

The next section contains the announcements against God’s people (the focus is no longer on the sins of foreign nations, but on God’s people).

The first part (3:9-4:13) shows God building his case against Israel through 4 *modified lawsuits*:

Royal Fortifications (3:9-12)

Summons (3:9) “assemble yourselves”

Accusation (3:10) ignorance of what is right; violence

Sentence (3:11-12) exile

Altars & Mansions (3:13-15)

Summons (3:13) “hear and testify”

Sentence (3:14-15) altars destroyed, mansions demolished

Wealthy Women (4:1-3)

Summons (4:1a) “Hear this word”

Accusation (4:1b) oppress poor and needy; gluttony

Sentence (4:2-3) violent exile

Gilgal & Bethel (4:4-12)

Summons (4:4-5) “Enter...”

Accusation (4:6-11) unrepentant in face of chastisement

Sentence (4:12) overthrowing destruction

The conclusion of this part is a *hymn fragment* in 4:13 (note the “He who...”)

The second part (5:1-17) is God’s *Call to Lament* over Israel’s punishment:

1st Call to Lament: Summons (5:1) “Hear this word...”

Description of tragedy (5:2-3) Destruction of Israel

2nd Call to Lament: Call to React (5:4-6) “Seek me....and live”

Address to the Fallen (5:7-13) God knows their sins (5:8-9 Hymn fragment)

3rd Call to Lament: Call to React (5:14-15) “hate evil, love good”

Description of Mourning (5:16-17) Wailing and lamentation

The third part (5:18-6:7) are the *Woes* of punishment:

1st Woe (5:18a) to those who long for the day of the Lord

Explanation & Accusation (5:18b-26) hypocritical worship; idolatry

Sentence (5:27) exile

2nd Woe (6:1) to the complacent leaders in Samaria

Explanation & Accusations (6:2-6) pomp and callousness

Sentence (6:7) exile

NOTE: “The Day of the Lord” used to mean, for the Israelites, that God will intervene and destroy our enemies. Amos used it to mean that God will intervene by judging the apostasy of Israel. Ultimately, this term should be understood in terms of the Second Coming of Christ when God will intervene in the final judgment showing himself to be the victor over all the world.

The fourth part (6:8-14) is God’s *Oath* against Israel:

Sentence (6:8-11)

Accusation (6:12-13)

Sentence (6:14)

These four lawsuits form a crescendo of judgment: 3 calls to lament, 2 woes, 1 oath – the destruction of Israel.

The four lawsuits are followed by 3 series of *visions* (7:1-9:10):

Vision 1: Locusts, Fire and Plumbline (7:1-17)

Amos is shown the Locusts. Amos reacts with a plea. God relents in sending Locusts.

Amos is shown the Judgment Fire. Amos reacts with a plea. God relents in sending Fire.

Amos is shown the Plumbline. God informs Amos that Israel had been built to God’s standards, but that they have fallen “out of plumb.”

Amos defends his motivations to the priest, Amaziah.

Vision 2: Ripe Fruit (8:1-14)

Israel is ripe for judgment (8:1-3)

Explanation (8:4-14) [Oracle of Judgment]

Accusation (8:4-6) cheating the poor

Sentence (8:7-14) destruction; upheaval

Vision 3: Altar (9:1-10)

God threatens judgment (9:1-4)

Explanation (9:5-10)

Hymn of Praise (9:5-6) [cf. 4:12-13; 5:8-9]

Oracle of Judgment (9:7-10) God will judge the whole nation

God concludes the prophecy of Amos with hope and blessing in two *oracles of salvation*:

1st Oracle: Restoration of Davidic Line (9:11)

Results of Restoration (9:12)

2nd Oracle: Promise of Reversal (9:13a)

Results of Reversal (9:13b-15)