

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 8-12-12 PM NOTES
AMOS
#32 in Series, "The Glory of God in the Old Testament"

1 Corinthians 10:11 (HCSB) "Now these things happened to them as examples, and they were written as a warning to us, on whom the ends of the ages have come."

Malachi 3:6a (NKJV) "For I *am* the Lord, I do not change..."

2 Peter 3:8-9 (ESV) "8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

Amos 4:12 (NKJV) "Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

I. The Man Amos

Amos 1:1 (NKJV) "The words of Amos, who was among the sheepleaders 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."

Amos 7:14-15 (NKJV) "14 Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: 'I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a sheepleader and a tender of sycamore fruit. 15 Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.'"

II. The Message of Amos

- God's voice is like a roaring lion (1:2)
- Judgment comes like a lion attacking a sheep (3:12)
- Judgment arrives like a fire sweeping through a house (5:6)
- Justice rolls like a river, and righteousness flows like a stream that refreshes and purifies (5:24)
- God evaluates His people like a builder using a plumb line on a wall (7:7-9)
- Israel will be planted like a vineyard to never be uprooted again (9:14-15)

Amos 4:1-2 (HCSB) "1 Listen to this message, you cows of Bashan who are on the hill of Samaria, women who oppress the poor and crush the needy, who say to their husbands, 'Bring us something to drink.' 2 The Lord God has sworn by His holiness: Look, the days are coming when you will be taken away with hooks, every last [one] of you with fishhooks."

Amos 6:3-8 (NKJV) "3 Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who cause the seat of violence to come near; 4 who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall; 5 who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, and invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; 6 who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. 7 Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, and those who recline at banquets shall be removed. 8 The Lord God has sworn by Himself, the Lord God of hosts says: 'I abhor the pride of Jacob, and hate his palaces; therefore I will deliver up the city and all that is in it.'"

A. A Message of Accusation

Amos 1:3 (NKJV) "Thus says the Lord: 'For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment...'"

Amos 1:6 (NKJV) "Thus says the Lord: 'For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment...'"

Amos pronounces judgment on Syria for their cruelty (1:3-5), Philistia for slavery (1:6-8), Phoenicia for breaking their treaty (1:9-10), Edom for their revengeful spirit (1:11-12), Ammon for violence (1:13-15), and Moab for injustice (2:1-3). He says of Judah that they perverted the law (2:4-5).

Amos 2:6-8 (HCSB) "6 The Lord says: I will not relent from punishing Israel for three crimes, even four, because they sell a righteous person for silver and a needy person for a pair of sandals. 7 They trample the heads of the poor on the dust of the ground and block the path of the needy. A man and his father have sexual relations with the same girl, profaning My holy name. 8 They stretch out beside every altar on garments taken as collateral, and they drink in the house of their God wine obtained through fines."

Amos 4:12b (NKJV) "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

B. A Message of Lamentation

Amos 2:13 (NKJV) "Behold, I am weighed down by you, as a cart full of sheaves is weighed down."

Amos 5:4 (NKJV) "For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: 'Seek Me and live.'"

Amos 5:6 (NKJV) "Seek the Lord and live, lest He break out like fire *in* the house of Joseph, and devour *it*, with no one to quench *it* in Bethel."

Amos 5:14-17 (NKJV) "¹⁴ Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the Lord God of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken. ¹⁵ Hate evil, love good; establish justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph. ¹⁶ Therefore the Lord God of hosts, the Lord, says this: '*There shall be* wailing in all streets, and they shall say in all the highways, 'Alas! Alas!' They shall call the farmer to mourning, and skillful lamenters to wailing. ¹⁷ In all vineyards *there shall be* wailing, for I will pass through you,' Says the Lord."

Amos 5:19 (NKJV) "It *will be* as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him! Or *as though* he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him!"

Amos 5:24 (NKJV) "But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

C. A Message of Restoration

Amos 9:13-15 (ESV) "¹³ 'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. ¹⁴ I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. ¹⁵ I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,' says the Lord your God."

III. The Major Application of Amos

A. God Chooses the Most Unlikely People

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (HCSB) "²⁶ Brothers, consider your calling: not many are wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth. ²⁷ Instead, God has chosen the world's foolish things to shame the wise, and God has chosen the world's weak things to shame the strong. ²⁸ God has chosen the world's insignificant and despised things—the things viewed as nothing—so He might bring to nothing the things that are viewed as something, ²⁹ so that no one can boast in His presence."

B. God Hates Heartless Worship

Amos 5:21-23 (NKJV) "²¹ I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies. ²² Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept *them*, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. ²³ Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments."

Isaiah 29:13b (NKJV) "...these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me..."

C. Abused Privilege Brings God's Harshest Judgment

Amos 3:2 (NASB) "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

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AMOS

#32 in Series, "The Glory of God in the Old Testament"

Amos is another one of the Minor Prophets. I would remind you that "minor" refers not to their importance, but to the length of the book. Isaiah is a "major prophet" because his book had 66 chapters and Amos is a "minor prophet" because his book has 9 chapters. Amos is the third of the Minor Prophets we have looked at and by the time we get through with Malachi (the twelfth of the Minor Prophets) you will recognize that the message of these prophets are a lot alike and it will seem that I am repeating myself most every week. That begs the question, "Why should we study these Minor Prophets?" Their messages are directed toward Israel and Judah and some of the surrounding nations. What has that got to do with the United States of America and the nations surrounding us in this 21st Century? The answer to this is found in **1 Corinthians 10:11 (HCSB)** "Now these things happened to them as examples, and they were written as a warning to us, on whom the ends of the ages have come." The "them" in 1 Corinthians 10:11 refers to the Israelites. God says to us, "Learn from my Old Covenant people; I have not changed." The word in 1 Corinthians 10:11 translated, "examples" is the word we get "types" from. It refers to a model, an illustration, or a pattern. In other words, Old Testament Israel is a model or pattern for us for how God deals with His people and the nations of the world. He tells us that these things are to serve as a warning to us. God has not changed. He says in **Malachi 3:6a (NKJV)** "For I *am* the Lord, I do not change..."

One of the ways God used His prophets was to show the Israelites not only the importance of repentance, but also the urgency of repentance. It seems that people of every generation tend to confuse the patience and longsuffering of God with apathy. People often think, "Because God has not acted, He probably doesn't care" Yet the Bible says in **2 Peter 3:8-9 (ESV)** "⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." Because God's judgment on a people does not come immediately doesn't mean that it is not coming at all. When Amos proclaimed God's warnings to Israel, they were in a time of national peace and material prosperity. Yet, in about 25 years from the time he spoke, the northern kingdom had been defeated by Assyria and was no longer in existence as a nation. Take that example seriously. Do you remember how swiftly the Soviet Union went from being a major world power to ceasing to exist about 20 years ago?

Let's look a little more in depth at the situation in Israel when Amos prophesied the Word of the Lord. Israel was neck deep in religious ritual, immorality, complacency and social injustice. Their worship was a travesty. They had a combination of Judaism and pagan religion. They proclaimed Jehovah as their God, but they also worshipped pagan idols. As we will see later, their worship of the true God was only on the surface and had no impact on the heart. There was great peace in the land since the Syrians were weakening and the Assyrians were the rising power, but were not yet a threat to Israel. It is possible that the great repentance of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital after Jonah's preaching had delayed for a generation the aggression of the Assyrians. It is likely that Jonah and Amos were contemporaries. Because there was peace and because the King of Israel was a good (though not godly) leader, the time of Amos' prophesy was a time of great material prosperity – at least for a few. The wealthy were oppressing the poor and injustice was rife in the land. Amos confronted this injustice with boldness. Amos was never invited to the high society parties of Israel! Perhaps the message of Amos could best be summarized by **Amos 4:12 (NKJV)** "Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" They were not going to meet Him in worship, but in judgment.

I am going to approach Amos, not verse by verse, but with a topical approach.

I. The Man Amos

We are told more about Amos than most of the other prophets. He was a contemporary of Jonah, Hosea and Isaiah. Amos was from Judah – the southern kingdom. Tekoa, his home was a small village about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. Many of the prophets were well known. Isaiah in the southern kingdom was on a first name basis with the royalty of Judah (though they hated him); Jeremiah was the son of a priest; Daniel was likely from the royal family since he was taken captive to Babylon in the first deportation. Amos, however, was a sheep breeder and a farmer who grew sycamore fruit. **Amos 1:1 (NKJV)** “The words of Amos, who was among the sheepbreeders 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.” **Amos 7:14-15 (NKJV)** “¹⁴ Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: ‘I *was* no prophet, nor *was* I a son of a prophet, but I *was* a sheepbreeder and a tender of sycamore fruit. ¹⁵ Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’” Sycamore trees which would grow in the poor sandy soil of Palestine yielded a small fruit a lot like a fig. This fruit was eaten only by the very poor. The gatherers would pinch or bruise the small fruit to make it ripen faster. Amos was a sheep breeder and a sycamore pincher. That didn’t put him in the higher echelons of society. Another strike against Amos is that he was from the southern kingdom and did his prophesying to the northern kingdom. This would not make him popular in the north. It would be sort of like a poor farmer from the hills of Tennessee going to New York City and telling mayor Bloomberg and the leaders of the city to prepare to meet God in judgment! Nobody invited Amos to their parties; nobody called him “Dr. Amos”. Yet, in spite of all the “negatives” about Amos, God called him and God used him. In fact, the language of 7:15, “took me” is the picture of God picking Amos up by the knap of the neck and flinging him into the prophetic ministry in the northern kingdom.

II. The Message of Amos

Even though Amos was uneducated in a formal way, he uses some brilliant images, illustrations and metaphors in proclaiming the message the Lord had given him to the people of Israel. Here are a few examples:

- God’s voice is like a roaring lion (1:2)
- Judgment comes like a lion attacking a sheep (3:12)
- Judgment arrives like a fire sweeping through a house (5:6)
- Justice rolls like a river, and righteousness flows like a stream that refreshes and purifies (5:24)
- God evaluates His people like a builder using a plumb line on a wall (7:7-9)
- Israel will be planted like a vineyard to never be uprooted again (9:14-15)

That’s just a few examples of the rich imagery in this book.

Israel’s main sins were a lack of genuine, God pleasing worship and injustice. Amos hits these two sins over and over. Amos doesn’t mince any words. He would never be a guest speaker in many pulpits today. Oh, he was plain spoken! Let me give you an example. **Amos 4:1-2 (HCSB)** “¹ Listen to this message, you cows of Bashan who are on the hill of Samaria, women who oppress the poor and crush the needy, who say to their husbands, “Bring us something to drink.” ² The Lord God has sworn by His holiness: Look, the days are coming when you will be taken away with hooks, every last [one] of you with fishhooks.” Amos, Amos, Amos! “Cows of Bashan”? That’s what he called the wealthy women living in the midst of need but consumed with opulence and luxury. Bashan was a lush farming region east of the Jordan River. The cows of Bashan were known for their sleekness and fine appearance. Amos warns them that the time was coming that they would be driven out like cattle. That time was only 25 years away. We see more of Amos’ plain language in **Amos 6:3-8 (NKJV)** “*Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who cause the seat of violence to come near;* ⁴ *who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall;* ⁵ *who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, and invent for yourselves musical instruments like David;* ⁶ *Who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.* ⁷ *Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, and those who recline at banquets shall be removed.* ⁸ *The*

Lord God has sworn by Himself, the Lord God of hosts says: 'I abhor the pride of Jacob, and hate his palaces; therefore I will deliver up *the* city and all that is in it.'" These clueless people reveled in what they thought was security, but their security was in military might, their possessions and the false belief that God would not let anything bad happen to them because they were His chosen people.

The message of Amos can be divided into three categories.

A. A Message of Accusation

Amos had an interesting approach in his proclamation of God's prophesies of judgment. If you took a map of the Middle East in Amos' time, you would see how he pronounces judgment upon all the surrounding nations before he gets to Israel. This was not just a planned tactic; God was pronouncing judgment on those nations. However, it certainly got the attention of the people. Amos also used a formula to communicate the deservedness of the judgment the nations would receive. The formula is in **Amos 1:3 (NKJV)** "For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away its *punishment...*" We see it again in **Amos 1:6a (NKJV)** "For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four..." This formula precedes the pronouncements of judgment on the nations. It is a rhetorical device to communicate that the cup of iniquity was full with three, but with four it overflowed. Amos pronounces judgment on Syria for their cruelty (1:3-5), Philistia for slavery (1:6-8), Phoenicia for breaking their treaty (1:9-10), Edom for their revengeful spirit (1:11-12), Ammon for violence (1:13-15), and Moab for injustice (2:1-3). So far, the people of Israel were probably shouting "Amen, preach it Brother Amos". Then Amos comes to Judah, the southern kingdom with whom they share a heritage. He says of Judah that they perverted the law (2:4-5). Doubtlessly, the hearers started getting quiet. I doubt that there were any more "amens". Then he lowers the boom in **Amos 2:6-8 (HCSB)** "6 The Lord says: I will not relent from punishing Israel for three crimes, even four, because they sell a righteous person for silver and a needy person for a pair of sandals. 7 They trample the heads of the poor on the dust of the ground and block the path of the needy. A man and his father have sexual relations with the same girl, profaning My holy name. 8 They stretch out beside every altar on garments taken as collateral, and they drink in the house of their God wine obtained through fines." They were guilty of injustice, taking advantage of the poor, sexual immorality, disobeying God's law and trying to use it for their own advantage (buying wine for false worship with money that came from fines from the people).

In chapter four, Amos shows the people how God patiently gave them affliction to get their attention, but they didn't listen. He sent famine and drought (4:6-8), blight and mildew to destroy crops (4:9), plagues (4:10), war (4:10), fire and natural disaster (4:11), and yet they ignored the Lord and His warnings and His calls to repent. God's patience is now gone and so He says in **Amos 4:12b (NKJV)** "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

B. A Message of Lamentation

In the messages of Lamentation, mourning, and grief, interspersed through Amos, we get a glimpse of the heart of God when the judgment of His people can be delayed no longer. Listen to **Amos 2:13 (NKJV)** "Behold, I am weighed down by you, as a cart full of sheaves is weighed down." This is likely God speaking of Himself. In chapter five, God invites His people over and over to seek Him. **Amos 5:4, 6 (NKJV)** "4 For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: 'Seek Me and live'" "6 Seek the Lord and live, lest He break out like fire *in* the house of Joseph, and devour *it*, with no one to quench *it* in Bethel". **Amos 5:14-17 (NKJV)** "14 Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the Lord God of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken. 15 Hate evil, love good; establish justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph. 16 Therefore the Lord God of hosts, the Lord, says this: '*There shall be* wailing in all streets, and they shall say in all the highways, 'Alas! Alas!' They shall call the farmer to mourning, and skillful lamenters to wailing. 17 In all vineyards *there shall be* wailing, for I will pass through you,' says the Lord." Apart from repentance and seeking the Lord, judgment is inevitable. The inevitability of judgment is described in **Amos 5:19 (NKJV)** "It *will be* as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him! Or *as though* he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him!" The point is that God's judgment is coming and even if one escapes one judgment, God will send another. The cry of God's heart expressed through Amos is summarized in

Amos 5:24 (NKJV) “But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream.” When God’s people live as if God does not exist and refuse to repent, God’s judgment is inevitable. With judgment comes grief, mourning and lamentation. Fast forward 25 years and you will see Assyria victorious and deporting the people from their land. The smell of death is everywhere and all of their wealth is gone. With every step into captivity the warnings of Amos surely came back to them. “This is what God said would happen. Oh why did we not listen?” Let me bring that message home to us. Don’t mistake God’s patience with you for thinking the sin that you excuse in your life will not be dealt with. Repent today!

C. A Message of Restoration

Judgment is never God’s final word to His people. In Chapters 7-9 we see 5 visions that speak of God’s judgment and the restoration that follows. The book closes with God affirming the promise He gives in many other places that finds its ultimate fulfillment in the reign of Christ as He establishes His kingdom here on an earth that has the curse of sin removed. This final restoration is described in **Amos 9:13-15 (ESV)** ¹³“Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. ¹⁴I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. ¹⁵I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,’ says the Lord your God.” That is the final chapter!

III. The Major Application of Amos

A. God Chooses the Most Unlikely People

God can use the eloquent Isaiah who was well known in the King’s palace; He can use the well known athlete or Politian, but God delights in using the “Amoses” among His people. One of the most comforting passages in the Bible for me is **1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (HCSB)** ²⁶Brothers, consider your calling: not many are wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth. ²⁷Instead, God has chosen the world’s foolish things to shame the wise, and God has chosen the world’s weak things to shame the strong. ²⁸God has chosen the world’s insignificant and despised things—the things viewed as nothing—so He might bring to nothing the things that are viewed as something, ²⁹so that no one can boast in His presence.” God delights to use a fig picking sheep farmer to proclaim His message of repentance to a sinful nation. If you think you are a nobody, you are a prime candidate to be used by God. Most of the people in Scripture and in church history that God has used have been the nobodies to the world. When God uses Amos, the heroes of church history, and you, He gets all of the glory. When you feel unqualified to be used by God, you have just met the first qualification!

B. God Hates Heartless Worship

It is a strong statement to say that God “hates” something, but it is a safe statement is that is what God says in His word. Because God seeks worshipers who worship Him in the right way (John 4:23), Those who worship Him wrongly are in real trouble with Him. **Amos 5:21-23 (NKJV)** ²¹“I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies. ²²Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept *them*, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. ²³Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments.” God hated their worship because it was just dead ritual done in hypocrisy. Isaiah described this worship God hates in **Isaiah 29:13b (NKJV)** “...these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me...” God created us to glorify Him, primarily through worship. When God’s people worship Him when harboring sin, when in rebellion, when their heart has given its primary affection to another, God is grieved and God eventually will judge His people.

C. Abused Privilege Brings God’s Harshes Judgment

Amos 3:2 (NASB) “You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” To those who have been the greatest recipients of God’s revelation and have

seen God's amazing work on their behalf, God will pour out the harshest judgment when they refuse to repent and walk in obedience to Him. Oh what does that say to this nation and to this church?

CONCLUSION

God desires for His people to worship Him alone and to turn from their sin, act with justice and obedience in all of their ways. When we refuse, **Amos 4:12 (NKJV)** says "Prepare to meet your God".