

3. Amos

I. Background and Context

- A. Amos reveals that he is a “herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs”¹ whom God called to prophesy to his people.
- B. Amos was a contemporary of Jonah’s, writing during the reigns of Uzziah (Judah) and Jeroboam (Israel), sometime between 793 B.C. when Jeroboam began his reign and 739 B.C. when Uzziah died.
- C. The unifying theme of Amos is the universal judgment of God, not only for the enemies of Israel (1.2-2.5), but also on the Israelites themselves (2.6-9.10), and would be “held more accountable than their neighbors.”²
- D. During these years, Israel seemed poised to begin a “Golden Age” of “wealth and prosperity unparalleled since the day of Solomon.”³ Assyria seemed to be in decline, both Judah and Israel enjoyed relatively stable governments, and Israel seemed “in a better position to capitalize on opportunities [for amassing wealth].”⁴
- E. Amos rebukes Israel for desiring the day of the LORD and reminds them what it really entails (5.18-27). He shows that this period of prosperity is God’s curse, and not his blessing (6.1-8).
- F. Scathing satire and irony are stylistic elements of Amos’ prophecy, as he addresses the wealthy women of Samaria as “fat cows” (4.1) and uses a priestly exhortation to call Israelites to Bethel, where Jeroboam had set up a golden calf, “to transgress” (4.4).

“[T]he Israelites took this wealth and prosperity to be unmistakable signs of the blessing of God. Thus, they were reinforced in their belief that ‘the day of the LORD’ would soon dawn in which God would subdue their enemies under their feet and make them the rulers of the world. But in fact, their present wealth and power was not evidence of the blessings of God. As Amos conclusively showed, they were actually under the curse of God because of their egregious breaches of their covenant with him... [I]t was Amos’s unhappy task to disabuse them of their foolish expectations. Not only was Israel not going to become ruler of the world, within just a few years they would not exist as a nation at all, and would continue to exist as a people only by the unmerited grace of God (9.11-15).”⁵

II. Outline

A. Judgment Oracles

1. Judgments on Israel’s neighbors (1.2-2.5)
2. Judgments on Israel (2.6-6.14)
 - a) An oracle of warning (3.1-15)
 - b) An oracle of doom (4.1-13)
 - c) An oracle of entreaty (5.1-17)
 - d) An oracle of woe (5.18-6.14)

B. Visions of Impending Judgment

1. A vision of inescapable judgment (7.1-17)
2. A vision of the terrible end (8.1-14)
3. A vision of the Lord standing beside the altar (9.1-15)

III. Key Passages

- A. Pronouncement of Judgment on Judah (2.4-5)

¹ Amos 7.14-15.

² *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1655.

³ *ESV Study Bible*, 1655.

⁴ *ESV Study Bible*, 1655.

⁵ *ESV Study Bible*, 1655-6.

1. Amos now turns to God's own people to announce that they will be included in God's judgment.
 2. Judah is held to a higher standard as "they have rejected the law of the LORD, and have not kept his statutes."⁶ The other nations "were reckoned with for injuries done to men, but Judah is reckoned with for indignities done to God."⁷
- B. Pronouncement of Judgment on Israel (2.6-16)
1. The northern kingdom of Israel is not spared from God's judgment.
 2. They, too, are reminded of the higher standard to which they are held, as God had "destroyed the Amorite before them" and "brought [them] up out of the land of Egypt."⁸
- C. Declaration of Israel's Guilt and Punishment (3.1-4.5)
- D. Israel Has Not Returned to the LORD (4.6-13)
1. Here God rebukes his people for refusing to repent, despite the judgments brought upon them for the purpose of their reformation. From this, we learn:
 - a) That which God designed in all his providential rebukes was to reduce them to their allegiance, to influence them to return to him.
 - b) That, had the Israelites returned to God, they would have been accepted, and their troubles would have been removed.
 - c) That the reason why God sent further troubles was because the former had proven insufficient in causing their reform, not that God took pleasure in afflicting his people.
 - d) That God was grieved at their obstinacy, and took it unkindly that they should force him to do that which he did so unwillingly.⁹
- E. A Call to Repentance (5.1-17)
1. What does repentance look like?
 - a) They must seek the LORD, and not seek idols (5.4-8).
 - b) They must seek good and love it (5.14-15).
 2. Why is repentance necessary?
 - a) Because it was by sin that they were brought into such a condition (5.7, 10-12).
 - b) Because it would be their happiness to seek God, and he is ready to be found by them (5.8, 9, 14).
 - c) Because he would proceed to their utter ruin if they did not seek him (5.5-6, 13, 16-17).
- F. Even in Amos' vision of future woes, we see the mercies of God. He formed the swarm of locusts as an instrument of his wrath, and yet even they were commanded to eat "only the latter growth, which is of little value in comparison with the former."¹⁰
- G. Restoration for Israel (9.11-15). Here, it is promised:
1. That in the Messiah, the kingdom of David will be restored (9.11);
 2. That the kingdom will be enlarged (9.12);
 3. That the kingdom will enjoy great abundance (9.13);
 4. That the kingdom will be well peopled (9.14);
 5. That the kingdom can never be uprooted (9.15).

⁶ Amos 2.4.

⁷ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 2014, www.biblestudytools.com.

⁸ Amos 2.9-10.

⁹ Henry.

¹⁰ Henry.