

## Prophet Amos

Amos prophesied during "the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel" (Amos 1:1). The prophet Amos was from the city of Tekoa, not many miles from the city of Jerusalem. It was a place of flocks and herds, and sheep and goats. Amos was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees when he received his call from God "the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me 'go, prophesy to my people Israel' " (Amos 7:15). He was also known as prophet of social justice.

Because Amos prophesied during the time of King Uzziah of Judah there was no doubt much prosperity in the land. In fact even the northern kingdom had gained great prosperity during the reign of Jeroboam according to the book of Kings (2 Kings 14:23-29). The prophet Amos focused his message of the chief cities in the northern kingdom, Bethel, the residence of the king and Samaria, the capital city. These cities were greatly prosperous, they had been enlarged and were on the main trade routes. Amos directed his message on the wealthy who were robbing the poor, they were living in luxury in their sumptuous houses (Amos 3:15). He likened their materialistic wives as "cows of Bashan" (Amos 4:1). They were gloating in all of their lusts and pomp and yet God saw what they were doing, for they were lacking justice, they had lost mercy, and they disregarded the poor. They were careful to groom their shrines and altars, yet they had forgotten the Lord and were given over to the most grotesque sorts of immorality, abuse, fornication, and drunkenness especially at the places of worship. God would not tolerate their ways and the prophet Amos came to announce the wrath of God.

The two greatest sins in society at that time:

- Unjust accumulation of wealth at the cost of the sufferings of the poor.
- Hypocritical religion – people believed in rituals rather than love for neighbor.

The message of Amos, is one of pure condemnation and judgment. In the first two chapters, he announces that the whole area of the northern kingdom of Israel was going to suffer punishment for its evil. He also named some of the most heinous crimes of the eight nations around Israel as he lamented who were also guilty. The depravity of these nations are spoken against and clearly described. The Ammonites are condemned "because they have ripped up women with child in Gilead that they might enlarge their border" (Amos 1:13); doom is promised to the Moabites because their taste for revenge was so strong that they burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom (Amos 2:1).

After condemning the neighboring nations, Amos turns his attention to Israel. He scorns them for the wealth they have gained at the expense of the poor (Amos 2:6-7) and for the same excesses that he mentioned about the nations around them. In Amos 4 he reminds them of the punishments which God had formerly used to recall his people from sin and warns them that this generation shall not escape a like trial - "therefore this will I do unto thee, O Israel and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12). The Israelites were warned that the only course which they can follow to avert the imminent disaster is to seek the Lord and to "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24).

## Five visions

### **1. Swarm of locusts devour the land**

Evil days lie ahead. Israel will be destroyed.

### **2. Burning heat devours the land – God is Just.**

(In the above two visions, the prophet Amos intercedes for the people before God and God is merciful and relents)

### **3. The Lord with a plumb line – measuring a wall (not straight) about to fall.**

Interpretation – Lord is testing the straightness of His people. Not finding it straight will destroy it.

### **4. Basket of ripe summer fruit**

Interpretation – summer fruit will eventually rot and decay.

So also will material goods. Israel is ripe for destruction. (Amos 8:1-3)

Amos speaks about the hypocritical religion pointing to the greed of the merchants (Amos 8: 4-7)

### **5. Fall of the Sanctuary ( Amos 9: 1-4)**

Yahweh – the Just God, reminds the people of all that He was to them during the exodus to the Promised Land.

## **Amos thrown out of Israel**

Amos's words angered the rich and the powerful. One of the principle priest of Bethel, Amaziah, denounced Amos to the King, accusing the prophet of conspiring against the king. Amos returned back to his herds and fig trees. But his words, written down by his friends and disciples, continued to echo in Israel long after he left.

The closing verses of Amos' prophecy ring hope as he speaks of the restoration of the Davidic line, referring no doubt to the Messiah.

Throughout the prophecy of Amos it is easy to see his unswerving message that God sees the greatest sins and they will not go unpunished, and the righteousness of God will ultimately triumph.

- Do the above events remind us of any social injustices we see today?
- What can we do about it?