

TEXT: Overview of Amos – Paul Apple – www.bibleoutlines.com paulgapple@gmail.com

TITLE: *NO ESCAPE CLAUSE FOR GOD’S OWN PEOPLE – SIN BRINGS JUDGMENT*

BIG IDEA:

PEOPLE OF PRIVILEGE ARE NOT IMMUNE FROM GOD’S JUDGMENT AND MUST RETURN TO THE LORD IN REPENTANCE TO EXPERIENCE HIS BLESSING

“You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” (3:2)

“I will not revoke its punishment . . .”

“Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; Because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” (4:12)

People with an impressive spiritual pedigree or important ministry position or years of fruitful Christian service can imagine at times that they are exempt from God’s standards. They excuse themselves when they sin – thinking they will not be held to the same high standard of righteousness or that they will somehow escape God’s judgment. Here in Amos, God demonstrates that the same severity and justice that He applied to the surrounding nations will be applied to His own people as well. God does not play favorites. In fact privilege and accessibility to God’s revelation bring greater accountability, not less.

“For to whom much has been given, much will be required.”

Stedman: The message of this book is basically to declare the impartiality of God. God plays no favorites. He makes no allowances for one person that he will not make for others as well. There is no such thing as being God’s fair-haired boy. He does not give any more to one than he does to another, in accordance with the promises that he makes. Any who are willing to fulfill the conditions of the promises will find his blessing poured out upon them, regardless of who they are; and any who presume upon these conditions will find him sitting in judgment upon them and his Word condemning them no matter who they are. This is the message of Amos. .

(:1-2) INTRODUCTION: SETTING AND SEVERITY OF THE MESSAGE

A. (:1) Setting

1. Identification of the Obscure Prophet

“The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa”

Amos would easily have been looked down upon by the kings of Israel and Judah and those in positions of authority and prominence. God usually does not choose to work through those who seem outwardly impressive (1 Cor. 1:26-31).

McComiskey: likely that Amos was a breeder of various types of animals besides sheep.

Mark Copeland:

NAME - Amos means "**burden-bearer**"

HOME - The village of Tekoa

a. 12 miles south of Jerusalem, 18 miles west of the Dead Sea

b. Near the wilderness of Judea, a very rugged area

-- So while he was Judah, he primarily prophesied against Israel in the north

OCCUPATION - **"a sheepbreeder and a tender of sycamore fruit."**

a. An outdoorsman, accustomed to the wilds of nature, and of hard, honest toil

b. It would be easy for him to have little sympathy for the lazy and materialistic conduct of his northern kinsman

CHARACTER

a. Not known for his sympathy or warmth, but for his sense of justice and right

b. **"Not a sob is to be found in his book for the nation of wicked apostates, and there is only a sigh for the poor"** (Hailey)

He is reminiscent of John the Baptist

http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/mp/mp_06.htm

Douglas Smith: Background on the Prophet

(Adapted from: The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

Before Amos began prophesying, he had been one of the "shepherds" of Tekoa, a town in the hill country of Judah about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. The word used for "shepherds" in 1:1 is not the usual Hebrew word *ro'eh*, but the rare word *noqeh*, suggesting instead "sheep breeders." Amos evidently managed or owned large herds of sheep and goats, and was in charge of other shepherds.

In Amos 7:14 the prophet further described himself as "a shepherd" and as one who "took care of sycamore-fig trees." This word for "shepherd," *bôqer*, occurs only here in the Old Testament, and describes a "herdsman" or "cattleman."

Besides overseeing his livestock operations, Amos was also occupied in growing sycamore fruit, presumably as a sideline. The sycamore-fig tree was a broad heavy tree, 25 to 50 feet high, which produced a fig-like fruit three or four times a year. The sycamore did not grow in the heights of Tekoa, but only in the warmer lowlands, as the Jordan Valley and the fertile oases by the Dead Sea. Both of these places were near enough to Tekoa for Amos to supervise the taking care of the trees (7:14)—a technical term that describes the process of slitting or scratching the forming fruit so that some juice runs out, allowing the rest of the fig to ripen into a sweeter, more edible fruit.

The three terms together indicate that Amos, as a breeder, rancher, and farmer, was a substantial and respected man in his community.

2. Medium of the Revelation

"which he envisioned in visions"

3. Focus of the Prophet's Burden = God's Own People

"concerning Israel"

4. Timeframe of His Ministry

a. Southern Kingdom reference

"in the days of Uzziah king of Judah"

b. Northern Kingdom reference

“and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel”

c. Natural Disaster reference

“two years before the earthquake”

MacArthur: Josephus connects it with Uzziah’s sin of usurping the role of a priest (2Chr 26:16-23). An earthquake of severe magnitude occurred ca. 755 B.C.

The book of Amos was written about **760 B.C.** We know this because he prophesied during the reigns of Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.) of Israel and Uzziah (790-740 B.C.) of Judah, and because he mentions an earthquake that archeologists calculate to have occurred about 760 B.C. Like Hosea, he specifically prophesies against the Northern Kingdom. During this time, the nation of Israel (the northern kingdom) was marked by total apostasy, idolatry, immorality, and such like. Amos prophesies against them ahead of their 722 B.C. destruction at the hands of the Assyrians. Amos’ name means *burden*. He was from Tekoa, about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. As many have noted, the first six chapters use the *oracle* or “word-based” prophecy format, whereas chapters seven through nine are conveyed through *visions*.

<http://www.fellowshipbibleannarbor.org/BibleStudies/collegesundayschool/Sum2005/AmosOutline.pdf>

B. (:2) Severity of the Message

1. Majestic Thunderings

*“He said, ‘The Lord roars from Zion
And from Jerusalem He utters His voice”*

Nobody can say that they didn’t hear the message; God spoke decisively and loudly and from the center of His abode with His chosen people. There was nothing subtle or hidden or obscured about God’s revelation. He demands a hearing and He demands the appropriate response of confession of sin and repentance.

2. Global Grovelings

*“And the shepherds’ pasture grounds mourn,
And the summit of Carmel dries up.”*

Nature got the message. The rest of God’s creation – the people made in His own image to have fellowship and communion with Him – need to respond in humility and submission as well.

MacArthur: Carmel known for its bountiful trees and lush gardens. “Carmel” means “fertility” or “garden land” and refers to the mountain range that runs E to W in northern Israel and juts out into the Mediterranean Sea (cf. 9:3).

McComiskey: the prophet saw God’s wrath causing a withering drought to destroy the green hills of Mount Carmel – a landmark of the northern kingdom. So in this vivid way, Amos pictured the impending judgment of God on that kingdom.

Douglas Smith – Background info taken from The Ultimate Guide to the Bible, Carol Smith, Barbour Publishing, 2000 -- Major transition coming with 722 BC invasion by Assyria just 30-

4- years away; Amos sent from Judah as a visiting prophet to bring God's message of judgment to Israel. People tend to think that tomorrow will be like today; false sense of security

Setting: The wealthy people of Israel were enjoying peace and prosperity. They were quite complacent and were oppressing the poor, even selling them into slavery. Soon, however, Israel would be conquered by Assyria, and the rich would themselves become slaves.

Megathemes:

- 1) Everyone Answers to God- Amos pronounced judgment from God on all the surrounding nations. God is in supreme control of all the nations, they all are accountable to Him.
- 2) Complacency- With all the comfort and luxury that Israel was experiencing came a false sense of security. Prosperity brought corruption and destruction.
- 3) Oppressing the Poor- The wealthy and powerful people of Samaria, the capital of Israel, had become prosperous, greedy and unjust. Illegal and immoral slavery came as the result of overtaxation and land-grabbing. There was also cruelty and indifference toward the poor. God is weary of greed and will not tolerate injustice.
- 4) Superficial Religion- Although many people had abandoned real faith in God, they still pretended to be religious. Merely participating in ceremony or ritual falls short of true religion.

I. (1:3 - 2:16) EIGHT BURDENS – ORACLES OF JUDGMENTS AGAINST THE NATIONS CLIMAXING WITH JUDGMENT AGAINST ISRAEL

Key Introductory phrase: *“for three transgressions and for four”*

Wiersbe: Eight times Amos used the phrase *“for three transgressions and for four,”* a Jewish idiom that means “an indefinite number that has finally come to the end.” God is long-suffering with sinners (2 Peter 3:9), but He marks what they do and His patience eventually runs out. To try God's patience is to tempt the Lord; and when we tempt the Lord, we invite judgment.

Constable: The expression "for three transgressions [Heb. *pasha'im*, rebellions, i.e., against the universal Sovereign; cf. Gen. 9:5-17] and for four" is one of Amos' trademark phrases (cf. vv. 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6). It means for numerous transgressions (cf. Job 5:19; 33:29; Ps. 62:11-12; Prov. 6:16; 30:15-16, 18-19, 21-23, 29-31; Eccles. 11:2; Mic. 5:5-6). "Three transgressions" represents fullness and the fourth overflow. Amos cited just the last transgression, the one that "broke the camel's back" and made judgment inevitable, or possibly the representative one, for Israel's enemies. The phrase may also be a poetic way of describing seven transgressions, symbolizing completeness.²⁶ In the oracle against Israel, Amos cited seven sins (one in 2:6, two in 2:7, two in 2:8, and two in 2:12). Israel's panic would also be sevenfold (2:14-16).

<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/amos.pdf>

A. (1:3-2:3) Against Israel's Enemies

1. (:3-5) Against Damascus (capital of Syria)

Reason: Decimated God's People with Cruelty and Brutality (2 Kings 13:7)

“Because they threshed Gilead with implements of sharp iron”

Judgment:

Wiersbe: Damascus was the capital of Syria, one of the Jews' persistent enemies. Amos denounced the Syrians for their inhuman treatment of the Israelites who lived in Gilead, east of the Jordan River. They cruelly “threshed them” as though they were nothing but stalks of grain.

God had called the Syrians to punish Israel (2 Kings 10:32-33; 13:1-9), but the Syrians had carried it too far.

The phrase “I will send a fire” (Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5) means “I will send judgment”; for fire represents the holiness and judgment of God (Deut. 4:11, 24, 36; Heb. 12:29). Indeed, the Lord did judge Syria: The dynasty of King Hazael ended; his son Ben-Hadad was defeated; Damascus lost its power (business was done at the city gate, Amos 1:5); and “the house of Eden” (delight, paradise) became a ruin. King Josiah defeated Ben-Hadad three times (2 Kings 13:25), but it was the Assyrians who finally subdued Syria and took them into captivity.

2. (:6-8) Against Gaza (capital of Philistia)

Reason: Deported and Enslaved Large Numbers of God’s People

“Because they deported an entire population to deliver it up to Edom”

Judgment:

Wiersbe: Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron were the five key Philistine cities (Josh. 13:5), and Amos denounced all of them for trading in human lives. 1-4 They raided Jewish villages and captured people to be sold as slaves. To add insult to injury, the Philistines sold these slaves to Israel’s ancient enemy, the Edomites. Since Edom was descended from Esau, Jacob’s brother, it was a case of brother enslaving brother. (God had something to say to Edom in Amos 1:11-12.) Throughout the history of ancient Israel, slavery was practiced, but the Law of Moses clearly governed how the slaves were to be treated. The law that permitted slavery at the same time protected the slaves. However, it was one thing to put a prisoner of war to work and quite something else to kidnap innocent people and sell them like cattle.

God’s judgment on Philistia came in the days of King Uzziah (2 Kings 18:7-8) and the Assyrian invaders under Sargon and the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. The slave masters were themselves taken into exile and slavery.

3. (:9-10) Against Tyre (capital of Phoenicia)

Reason: Delivered up God’s People in Violation of a Peace Pact

“Because they delivered up an entire population to Edom and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.”

Judgment:

Wiersbe: Amos has moved from Damascus in the northeast to the Philistine cities in the southwest, and now he sets his sights straight north on Phoenicia and its major city, Tyre. During the reigns of David and Solomon, Israel had a warm relationship with the people of Tyre (1 Kings 5:1ff). Amos called it “the brotherly covenant” (“treaty of brotherhood,” NIV), suggesting that the “covenant” was more than a treaty but involved a friendly partnership that went deeper than politics.

Tyre, however, committed the same sins as the Philistine cities by selling Jewish captives to the Edomites as slaves (Amos 1:6-8). But Tyre’s sin was worse than that of Philistia because Tyre was violating a long-standing compact that was based on friendship and a mutual respect for humanity. Tyre was selling its friends as slaves!

Judgment came in 332 B.C. when Alexander the Great wiped Tyre off the face of the earth and left it a place for drying nets (26:5, 14). “

4. (:11-12) Against Edom

Reason: Denied Forgiveness and Compassion in Relentlessly Pursuing Hatred and Violence

*“Because he pursued his brother with the sword,
While he stifled his compassion;
His anger also tore continually,
And he maintained his fury forever.”*

Judgment:

Wiersbe: The Edomites nursed a long-standing grudge against the Jews, perpetuating the ancient rivalry between Jacob and Esau, which began before the twin boys were born (Gen. 25:21-26). The Edomites wouldn't allow their Jewish cousins to pass through their land during Israel's march to Canaan (Num. 20:14-21). King Saul suppressed the Edomite army (1 Sam. 14:47), and David conquered them (2 Sam. 8:14), but in the days of King Jehoram, Edom revolted against Judah and won their freedom (2 Kings 8:16-22).

Amos condemned the Edomites for their persistent hatred of the Jews, which the prophet described as “raging anger and flaming fury” (Amos 1:11; see also NIV). We don't know when the Edomites aided the enemy by pursuing the Jews with the sword. It could have been during anyone of the numerous times when enemies invaded the land. When the Babylonians attacked and captured Jerusalem, the Edomites assisted the enemy and gave vent to their anger (Obad. 10-14; see Ps. 137:7). You would think that brother would help brother in a time of need, but the Edomites “cast off all pity” (Amos 1:11) and acted like beasts instead of humans. The phrase “his anger did tear” (v. 11) uses a verb that describes ferocious beasts tearing their prey (Ps. 7:2; Gen. 37:32).

Ternan and Bozrah were strong cities that today don't exist. The Edomites lived “in the clefts of the rock” and had their “nest among the stars” (Obad. 3-4), boasting that their fortresses were impregnable; but the Lord destroyed their nation so thoroughly that nothing is left today except ruins. When the Romans attacked Jerusalem in A.D. 70, they destroyed what was left of the Edomite (Idumean) people, and Edom was no more.

5. (:13-15) Against Ammon

Reason: Devastated God's People in Covetous Kingdom Expansion

*“Because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead
In order to enlarge their borders.”* (2 Kings 8:12)

Judgment:

Wiersbe: The Ammonites and Moabites (2:1-3) were the descendants of Lot through his incestuous union with his daughters (Gen. 19:30-38). They were a ruthless people who were the avowed enemies of the Jews (Deut 23:3-6; 1 Sam. 11:2; Neh. 2:10-19; Jer. 40:14; 41:5-7). In order to enlarge their land, they invaded Gilead; and not satisfied with attacking the men defending their homeland, the Ammonites killed women and unborn children (see 2 Kings 8:12; 15:16). To the Ammonites, land was more important than people, including defenseless women and innocent children. Such brutality shocks us, but is “modern warfare” any kinder?

Amos announced that a storm of judgment would come to the people of Ammon and that their

capital city (Rabbah) would be destroyed. This took place when the Assyrians swept over the land in 734 B.C. Not only did Amos predict the destruction of their land, but so did Ezekiel (25:1-7). The chief god of Edom was Molech (Malcham, Milcom), which means “reigning one, king.” Amos 1:15 could be translated, “Molech will go into exile,” thus showing the inability of their god to save them.

6. (2:1-3) Against Moab

Reason: Desecrated the Dead in Act of Disrespect and Degradation

“Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.”

Judgment:

Constable: Yahweh promised not to revoke His punishment of Moab, another nation descended from Lot (cf. Gen. 19:30-38), because of its brutal treatment of an Edomite king's corpse (cf. 2 Kings 3:26-27). Burning the bones of a dead person dishonored that individual since there was then nothing substantial left of him. Burning the king's bones indicated a desire to completely destroy the peace and even the soul of Edom's king, in this case King Mesha, for eternity. This was a despicable crime in the ancient Near East where a peaceful burial was the hope of every person. This treatment of a dead corpse reflected a lack of respect for human life, life made in the image of God.

Wiersbe: Animosity between Moab and Israel began very early when the Moabites refused to give the Jews passage on the major highway (Deut. 23:3-4; Judges 11:17). The king of Moab also hired Balaam to curse Israel (Num. 22-24), and then the Moabite women seduced the Jewish men to commit fornication and idolatry (Num. 25). During the period of the judges, Israel was subject to the Moabites for eighteen years (Judges 3:12-30).

What was the sin of Moab? Disrespect for the dead and for royalty. We don't know which king's remains were subjected to this humiliation, but the deed disgraced the memory of the king and humiliated the people of Edom.

Amos announced that the king of Moab and his officials were all guilty and would be destroyed, along with their cities. 1-7 Moab was taken by the Assyrians, and the land eventually became the home of numerous nomadic tribes. The nation of Moab was no more. (For other prophecies of Moab's doom, see Isa. 15-16; Jer. 48; Ezek. 25:8-11; Zeph. 2:8-11.)

B. (2:4-16) Against Judah and Israel

1. (2:4-5) Against Judah

Reason: Deceived and Rebelled Against the Lord

“Because they rejected the law of the Lord

And have not kept His statutes;

Their lies also have led them astray,

Those after which their fathers walked.”

Judgment:

Wiersbe: Although the temple was filled with people bringing their sacrifices, but Judah was a nation given over to idolatry. ‘Their lies [idols] lead them astray, lies after which their fathers walked’ (2:4, NKJV). They were wandering like lost animals and like drunken men. The Gentiles had sinned against conscience and the laws of brotherhood and humanity, but the Jews had despised and rejected the very laws of God, given to them by Moses. Theirs was the greater

sin, for greater privilege always brings greater responsibility (Rom. 2:17-3:9).

God had frequently punished His people in their land by allowing various nations to attack and subdue them, but now He would punish them out of their land. The Babylonian army would destroy Jerusalem and take thousands of captives to Babylon where they would live in the midst of gross idolatry for seventy years. However, unlike the six Gentile nations Amos had denounced, Judah would not be destroyed but would be spared. In His mercy, God would allow a remnant of Jews to return to establish the nation and rebuild the temple.

2. (2:6-16) **Climax: Against Israel**

Reason: Disobeyed in 3 major areas: Injustice, Immorality and Idolatry

Judgment:

Wiersbe: Both Israel and Judah were enjoying peace and prosperity, and divine judgment was the furthest thing from their minds.

Amos first exposes their sinful present and names three flagrant sins. To begin with, the people of the Northern Kingdom were guilty of **injustice** (Amos 2:6-7a). Supported by corrupt judges, the rich were suing the poor, who couldn't pay their bills, and forcing them into servitude and slavery.

Their second gross sin was **immorality** (Amos 2:7b), with fathers and sons visiting the same prostitute! These may have been "cult prostitutes" who were a part of the heathen idolatrous worship. Thus there was a double sin involved: immorality and idolatry. Or the girl may have been a household servant or a common prostitute. Regardless of what the act of disobedience was, it was rebellion against God and defiled His holy name.

The third sin was open **idolatry** (Amos 2:8). The wealthy men took their debtors' garments as pledges but did not return them at sundown as the law commanded (Ex. 22:26-27; Deut. 24:10-13, 17). Instead, these rich sinners visited pagan altars, where they got drunk on wine purchased with the fines they exacted from the poor. Then, in their drunken stupor, they slept by the altars on other people's garments, defiling the garments and disobeying the law. The officials were getting rich by exploiting the people, and then were using their unjust gain for committing sin. After describing their sinful present, Amos reminded them of their glorious past (Amos 2:9-12). God had led His people out of Egypt (v. 10a), cared for them in the wilderness (v. 10b), and destroyed other nations so the Jews could claim their inheritance in Canaan (vv. 9, 10c). He gave them His Word through chosen prophets (v. 11a), and He raised up dedicated people like the Nazirites (Num. 6) to be examples of devotion to God. What a glorious past they had! But instead of being humbled by these blessings, the people rebelled against the Lord by rejecting the messages of the prophets and forcing the Nazirites to break their holy vows. The Jews wanted neither the Word of God nor examples of godly living.

Amos closed his message with the announcement of their terrible future (Amos 2:13-16). Israel would be crushed by their own sins just as a loaded cart crushes whatever it rolls over. Judgment is coming, and nobody will be able to escape. The swift won't be able to run away; the strong won't be able to defend themselves; the armed will be as if unarmed; and even the horsemen will be unable to flee. The bravest soldiers will run away while shedding their equipment and clothing so they can run faster. Yes, Assyria would invade Israel (720 B.C.) and the nation would be no more.

James D. Nogalski: Taken as a group, one should note the climactic order of the oracles. The indictments proceed against foreign countries, but the order in which the countries are mentioned encircles Israel as a means of accenting the transgression of YHWH's people. http://www.galaxie.com/article.php?article_id=8224 - GRE92B023#GRE92B023 By placing the oracles against Judah and Israel at the end of the cycle, Amos 1:3–2:16 deliberately saves the worst for last. Amos preached to the Northern Kingdom (Israel), and ancient readers/hearers of these oracles would have wholeheartedly concurred with YHWH's judgment against foreign lands. However, they would have been surprised when the judgment turned against them. Subtly, the text conveys an extremely important theological concept. YHWH's people must adhere to the same standards of conduct as those who are outside the immediate community. In fact, these oracles reflect greater expectations for Judah and Israel because of their relationship to YHWH. The oracles of Amos 1:3–2:16 remind us about the danger of recognizing the sins of others while being blind to our own (cf. Matt 7:3–5; Luke 6:41–42). http://www.galaxie.com/article.php?article_id=8224

Constable: There are four sections to this oracle: Israel's recent sins, God's past gracious activity on Israel's behalf, Israel's response, and Israel's punishment.

Israel's recent sins 2:6-8

God's past grace 2:9-11

Israel's response to God's grace 2:12

Israel's consequent punishment 2:13-16

II. (3:1 - 6:14) THREE MESSAGES OF CONDEMNATION AGAINST ISRAEL

Key introductory phrase: "*Hear ye this word!*" [3:1; 4:1; 5:1]

J. Sidlow Baxter: [following his outline in this section]

Each of them is divided by an emphatic "*therefore,*" so that in each we have, in the first part, judgment **deserved**, and in the remainder, judgment **decreed** . . .

The first of these addresses declares the fact of Israel's guilt in the **present**. The second stresses Israel's sin in the **past** (see verses 6 to 11, which recount Jehovah's repeated but unavailing chastenings of Israel, and note the five-times occurring mournful refrain, "*Yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith Jehovah*" – verses 6, 8, 9, 10, 11). The third address stresses the punishment of Israel's sin in the **future** (see v. 1-3 and v. 16 to vi. 14). Note the vehemence and intensity at the end (vi. 9-14). Yet notice, also, in this third address, the eleventh hour warning in the thrice-uttered appeal of Jehovah: "*Seek ye Me, and ye shall live,*" etc. (v. 4, 6, 14).

Note further about these three addresses that in the first we see the **principle** underlying Divine judgment – "*You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities*" (iii. 2). This is the key verse of this book. Amos is the prophet of judgment for abused privilege. Judgment is always determined according to privilege. Increased privilege is increased responsibility. Israel had been supremely favoured, and therefore was supremely responsible. Here is a solemn lesson for all of us to learn.

In the second address we see the **forbearance** behind Divine judgment. Before the stroke of a final major judgment is allowed to fall on the nation, there comes a succession of minor judgments, to warn (iv. 6-11). It is when these are ignored and the Divine patience is outraged

that the culminative judgment falls (iv. 12).

In the third address we see the uncompromising **severity** of Divine judgment on the impenitent, where sin has been obdurately persisted in (v. 2, 3; vi. 8-14).

Constable: [Alternative Approach]

After announcing that God would judge Israel, Amos delivered **five messages** in which he explained more fully why God would judge the Northern Kingdom. Appeals for repentance and explanations of how to avoid judgment appear within these messages. The first three begin with the word, "*Hear*" (3:1; 4:1; 5:1; cf. Prov. 8:32), and the last two begin "*Alas*" (5:18) and "*Woe*" (6:1), both translations of the Hebrew word *hoy*. The first message was explanation, the second accusation, and the third lamentation.

A. (3:1-15) Message #1 -- Judgment Should Be No Surprise –
Israel Stands Guilty of Idolatry, Violence and Materialism

Great privilege brings great responsibility

*“You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth;
Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”* (3:2)

1. (:1-10) Judgment Deserved

a. (:1-2) Israel’s Unique Covenantal Relationship with God

b. (:3-8) Inescapable Judgment -- for Ignoring God’s Clear Revelation to His Chosen People

Wiersbe: At this point, the people were probably saying, “Who is this rustic farmer that he should preach to us and claim to be God’s prophet? What kind of authority does he think he has?” Amos even dared to preach uninvited at the king’s chapel at Bethel, where King Jeroboam’s chaplain told Amos to go home and preach in Judah (7:10-16).

Amos replied to their ridicule by arguing from effect to cause. If two people want to walk together, they have to appoint a time and place to meet (Amos 3:3). If the lion roars, it’s because he’s caught his prey (v. 4). If a trap springs, it means the bird has been caught (v. 5); and if the people in a city are terrified, it’s because the trumpet has blown, warning them of danger (v. 6). These are obvious facts of life that any thinking person would acknowledge.

When a prophet proclaims God’s Word, it’s because the Lord is about to do something important and wants to warn His people (3:7).

MacArthur: The Lord posed a series of questions to show that, as some things are certain in nature, surely nothing happens in Israel that is outside His sovereignty. Certain actions have certain results! The Lord had spoken a word, and therefore the prophet was to speak, and the people were to listen with trembling. Instead, they tried to silence the prophet (cf. 2:12; 7:12,13).

c. (:9-10) Publicized Judgment – Invoking Witnesses to God’s Judgment
Against Samaria for Idolatry, Violence and Materialism

Wiersbe: In his day, the Prophet Isaiah called heaven and earth to witness against Judah (Isa. 1:2;

see Deut. 30:19; 31:28); and Amos summoned the Gentile nations to witness against the Northern Kingdom of Israel whose capital was Samaria. The sin of Israel was so great that it even appalled the pagan nations; for, after all, Israel was sinning against a flood of light (1 Cor. 5:1).

Amos called for the Philistines (“Ashdod,” Amos 1:8) and the Egyptians to witness what was going on in Samaria (v. 9). The leaders of Israel weren’t interested in obeying God’s Law and helping the less fortunate. Rather, they were eagerly and unjustly robbing the poor and amassing as much wealth as possible. They built costly houses, filled them with expensive furnishings, and lived in luxury while the poor of the land suffered (3:15; 4:1; 5:11; 6:4-6).

What a terrible indictment: “*They do not know how to do right*” (Amos 3:10, NIV). They were so bound by their greed and idolatry that it was impossible for them to do what was right.

Constable: Yahweh announced that the Israelites had plundered, looted, and terrorized each other so long that they no longer knew how to do right (Heb. *nekohah*, straightness). The Israelites were different from their aggressors because they plundered and looted their own fortresses rather than those of a foreign enemy. It was as though the Israelites hoarded up violence and devastation as others, and they, hoarded material wealth. Now the wealthy foreigners, infamous for their own similar sins, would see that the Israelites behaved even worse in their citadels.

2. (:11-15) Judgment Decreed -- Comprehensive Judgment – Extending to Their Perceived Invincibility, Their Man-Made Religious System and Their Decadent Opulence

Wiersbe: Amos announced that the kingdom of Israel would fall to an enemy and the great city of Samaria would be plundered. This happened in 722 B.C. when the Assyrians invaded Israel. The people of Israel had plundered one another, but now a pagan Gentile nation would plunder them. We reap what we sow.

To illustrate what would happen to Israel, Amos borrowed from his experiences as a shepherd. According to Exodus 22:10-13, if a lion takes a sheep and tears it to pieces, the shepherd had to bring remnants of the sheep to prove that it was truly dead (see Gen. 31:39). This would assure the owner of the flock that the shepherd wasn’t stealing sheep and lying to his employer. By the time Assyria was through with Israel, only a small remnant of the people would be left. The lion was about to roar! (Amos 1:2; 3:8)

According to 2 Kings 17:5ff, the Assyrians killed some Israelites, took others captive, and then brought into the land captives from other nations, thus producing a people with diverse racial and religious backgrounds. The surviving Jews in the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom married people who were not Jews, and this produced the people we know as the Samaritans. The “pure” Jews rejected this new “mongrel race” (John 4:9); so the Samaritans set up their own temple and priesthood and established their own religion, which the Lord rejected (vv. 19-24).

Amos made it clear that the invasion of the Assyrians was a work of God, for He was punishing Israel for her sins (Amos 3:14). Why? Because of their selfish luxury and their impudent idolatry. The people resting on their ivory beds in their expensive mansions would be stripped and led off as prisoners of war. The wealthy who had both summer and winter houses would have no houses.

When the Jewish kingdom was divided after the death of Solomon (1 Kings 12), King Jeroboam of Israel didn't want his people going to Jerusalem to worship, lest they go to Judah and never return to Israel. So he established shrines with golden calves at Dan and Bethel, set up his own priesthood, and encouraged the people to worship in Israel. Contrary to the Law of Moses, the king also allowed the people to visit local shrines, where it was more convenient to worship whatever god they chose.

Amos announced that the Lord would destroy the royal chapel at Bethel (Amos 7:13), which indicated that Israel's entire man-made religious system would be demolished. Nobody would be able to lay hold of the horns of the altar and claim protection (1 Kings 1:50-53), for the horns would be cut off.

Constable (3:15) God also promised to destroy the Israelites' winter and summer homes. The fact that many Israelite families could afford two houses and yet were oppressing their poorer brethren proved that they lived in selfish luxury. They had embellished their great houses with expensive ivory decorations (cf. 1 Kings. 21:1, 18; 22:39; Ps. 45:8). The two great sins of the Israelites, false religion (v. 14) and misuse of wealth and power (v. 15), would be the objects of God's judgment. Even some ancient kings did not possess two houses.

B. (4:1-13) Message #2 -- Judgment Could Have Been Avoided by Repentance --
But God Has Reached the Limits of His Patience and Forbearance with His Stubbornly
Rebellious People

"Yet you have not returned to me"

1. (:1-11) Judgment Deserved for Idolatry and Oppression

a. (:1-3) Humiliating Deportation due to Decadent Opulence

Here Amos condemned the opulence of the women of Samaria who were as greedy and insensitive as their husbands.

b. (:4-5) Hypocritical Religious Exercises – Form without Heartfelt Repentance

Sacrifices

Tithes

Thank Offering

Free will Offering

c. (:6-11) Five Historical Scenarios of Stubbornly Spurning God's Fatherly Discipline

Key: *"'Yet you have not returned to Me,' declares the Lord."*

1) (:6) Discipline of Famine – no food to eat

2) (:7-8) Discipline of Drought – Providentially withholding or providing rainfall

3) (:9) Discipline of Disease and Plagues upon the crops

4) (:10) Discipline of Defeats in War – the stench of dead bodies in the camp

5) (:11) Discipline of Devastating Destruction – Sodom and Gomorrah
- yet rescuing a small remnant

McComiskey: referring to violence suffered by certain Israelite cities during the Syrian incursions. The account of them in 2 Kings 13:1-9 refers to a “deliverer” (v.5) who restored the conquered people to their homes. The analogy of the stick snatched from the fire aptly describes the conquered towns that might have been lost forever to Israel but were “snatched” from the fire of conflict and restored to their inhabitants because of the intervention of this unnamed “deliverer.”

2. (:12-13) Judgment Decreed -- Hopelessness of Israel Escaping God’s Judgment

a. (:12) Prepare to Meet Your God

*“Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel;
Because I will do this to you,
Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”*

McComiskey: The command “*Prepare*” should not be understood as a plea for the people to repent. The die was cast. They did not turn to God when he chastised them (vv. 6-11), and now Amos held out no hope for their full-scale repentance. The words seem nothing more than an imperative for the people to get ready for the national calamity about to befall them.

b. (:13) Know the Capabilities of Your God

*“For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind
And declares to man what are His thoughts,
He who makes dawn into darkness
And treads on the high places of the earth,
The Lord of hosts is His name.”*

McComiskey: In one bold sweep, this hymn shows the sovereignty of God – from his creation of the world to his daily summoning of the dawn, from his intervention in history to his revelation of mankind’s thoughts. Every believer can take comfort in the fact that, while sometimes it seems that God does not interfere in human affairs, the world is never out of his control. His sovereignty extends to every aspect of human experience.

C. (5:1 – 6:14) Message #3 -- Judgment Will be Severe Against Those Who Have Persisted in Sin

1. (5:1-15) Judgment Deserved for Failing to Seek After God and Righteousness

a. (:1) Literary Genre = Lament

“Hear this word which I take up for you as a dirge, O house of Israel:”
Cf. Lamentations of Jeremiah

b. (:2-3) Tragic Fall

1) (:2) Beyond Help

*“She has fallen, she will not rise again – the virgin Israel.
She lies neglected on her land;
There is none to raise her up.”*

2) (:3) Reduced to a Pitiful Remnant

*“For thus says the Lord God,
‘The city which goes forth a thousand strong will have a hundred
left,
And the one which goes forth a hundred strong will have ten left to
The house of Israel.’”*

c. (:4-15) Three Exhortations to Seek after God and Righteousness

1) (:4-5) *“Seek Me that you may live”*

Avoid Idolatry

2) (:6-13) *“Seek the Lord that you may live”*

The destructive power of God’s judgment

The detailing of Israel’s sins

The failure to respond to reproofs

The full knowledge of God regarding their sins

3) (:14-15) *“Seek good and not evil, that you may live”*

*“And thus may the Lord God of hosts be with you, just as you
have said!*

Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the gate!

*Perhaps the Lord God of hosts may be gracious to the remnant of
Joseph.”*

Stedman: Now this is the reason this book is so loved by the liberal; Amos is called the prophet of social justice, the man who demanded that man treat their fellow-man rightly. Liberals love this book because of these thundering pronouncements against the social evils of Amos' day -- and rightly so. God is always disturbed by social injustices. But what the liberals seem to miss in this book is Amos' appeal to these people. He doesn't just say to them, "Now stop doing these things." He does say that, but that isn't all he says. It is how to stop doing these things that is the important message, and you will find it plainly given twice in chapter 5:

For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel:

"Seek me and live." {Amos 5:4 RSV}

["Don't go to Bethel. Don't go to those golden calves. Seek me and live."]

Seek the Lord and live,

lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph. {Amos 5:6a RSV}

What is the answer to the wandering heart? The answer isn't just to clean up your life. It is to come back to God. It is to repent and to think again. Turn. Come back to the Lord of your salvation. Call upon him. Ask him to set you back on your feet and straighten out your life. That is the answer. That is always God's appeal. Come back into a relationship with one who loves and in patience tries to awaken us and bring us back to himself.

Constable: [5:1-17] The structure of this message is chiasmic, which focuses attention and emphasis on the middle part.

A A description of certain judgment vv. 1-3

B A call for individual repentance vv. 4-6

C An accusation of legal injustice v. 7

- D A portrayal of sovereign Yahweh vv. 8-9
- C' An accusation of legal injustice vv. 10-13
- B' A call for individual repentance vv. 14-15
- A' A description of certain judgment vv. 16-17

2. (5:16 – 6:14) Judgment Decreed with an Emphasis on its Severity

a. (5:16-17) Time of Extreme Mourning

*“Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts, the Lord,
‘There is wailing in all the plazas,
And in all the streets they say, Alas! Alas!
They also call the farmer to mourning and professional mourners to
lamentation.*

*And in the vineyards there is wailing,
Because I will pass through the midst of you,’ says the Lord.”*

b. (5:18-20) Time of Extreme Darkness

c. (5:21-27) Time of Exposing Hypocrisy

God desires justice and righteousness rather than vain religious show

*“‘Therefore, I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus,’ says the
Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.”*

Constable: The fourth message on unacceptable worship 5:18-27

This lament also has a chiasmic structure. It centers on a call for individual repentance.

A A description of inevitable judgment vv. 18-20

B An accusation of religious hypocrisy vv. 21-22

C A call for individual repentance vv. 23-24

B' An accusation of religious hypocrisy vv. 25-26

A' A description of inevitable judgment v. 27

d. (6:1-14) Time of Rebuking False Security

“Woe to those who are at ease in Zion”

Constable: [6:1-2] Amos challenged these proud leaders to visit other cities that had once considered themselves great. Calneh (or Calno, Isa. 10:9) and Hamath were city-states in northern Aram. Shalmaneser III of Assyria had overrun them in 854-846 B.C., but Israel controlled them in Amos' day. Gath had been a notable city in Philistia, but it had fallen before King Hazael of Aram in 815 B.C. and again to King Uzziah of Judah in 760 B.C. Presently Judah controlled it. Samaria was no better than those city-states, and their territories were larger than Samaria's. Yet they had fallen to foreign invaders. What had happened to them could happen to Samaria even though the people of Israel believed that Yahweh would protect it.

Wiersbe:

1. “WOE TO THE IGNORANT!” (5:18-27)
2. “WOE TO THE INDIFFERENT!” (6:1-2)
3. “WOE TO THE INDULGENT!” (6:3-7)
4. “WOE TO THE IMPUDENT!” (6:8-14)

These impudent people, who rejected God’s warning, would one day face three terrible

judgments.

Death (Amos 6:9-10)

Amos describes a hypothetical situation to emphasize the terrors that will come when the Assyrians invade Samaria. Ten men, perhaps the remnants of a hundred soldiers (5:3), would be hiding in a house, but pestilence would catch up with them, and they would die. If a relative came to burn the bodies (the safest thing to do in war when disease is rampant), anyone in the house guarding the bodies would deny there were others there who also might die in the plague. But the disposal of the dead bodies wouldn't be a "religious" occasion, for the people would be afraid to even mention the name of the Lord lest He become angry and send more judgment.

Destruction (Amos 6:11-13)

Pride always goes before destruction (Prov. 16:18). The summer houses and winter houses that the wealthy enjoyed and boasted about would one day be nothing but ashes and fragments. The Babylonians would even burn Judah's beautiful temple. This would occur because the Lord commanded it, and His commands are always obeyed.

Disgrace and defeat (Amos 6:14)

Assyria's invasion of Israel wouldn't take place because of the accidents or incidents of international politics. God would bring the army into the land and give Assyria the responsibility of chastening His people. "'Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel,' says the Lord" (Jer. 5:15, NKJV).

III. (7:1 – 9:10) FIVE VISIONS

Baxter: In these five visions we have, successively, judgment averted, restrained, determined, imminent, executed; and thus we see that there is an increasing intensity in the five visions, as there is in the three sermons. Yet even amid the execution of the culminative judgment, not one grain of the pure wheat was to be allowed to perish. Even in wrath "*God remembers mercy.*"

A. (7:1-3) Vision of Swarming Locusts -- Desolation

B. (7:4-6) Vision of Consuming Fire -- Destruction

C. (7:7-9) Vision of the Plumb Line – Divine Righteousness = the standard of measurement

Wiersbe: God's law is His plumb line, and He measures His people to see how true they are to the pattern in His Word, and if they are upright in character and conduct "Also I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the plummet" (Isa. 28:17, NKJV). Alas, in Amos' time, He found that Israel was "out of plumb" and therefore had to be destroyed. This would include Israel's high places and sanctuaries, where they worshiped contrary to God's law, for the only place the Jews were to bring their sacrifices was to the temple in Jerusalem (Lev. 17:1-7).

(7:10-17) ASIDE – Opposition to Amos and His Message

1. (:10-13) Amos Threatened by Amaziah (priest of Bethel)

2. (:14-17) Amos Fortified by Divine Calling

Constable: [7:16-17] Amos then announced a prophecy from the Lord for Amaziah. Because the priest had told the prophet to stop doing what Yahweh had commanded him to do (cf. 2:12), Amaziah's wife would become a harlot in Bethel. She would have to stoop to this to earn a living because she would have no husband or sons to support her. Her children would die by the sword. This may also imply the end of Amaziah's family line. Amaziah's land would become the property of others, presumably the Assyrians, and he himself would die in a foreign, pagan land. All these things would evidently happen when the foreign enemy destroyed Israel. Stifling the word of God proved disastrous for Amaziah, as it still does today. Finally, Amos repeated that Israel would indeed go into exile, the message that Amaziah had reported that Amos was preaching (cf. v. 11).

D. (8:1-14) Vision of the Perishing Summer Fruit – Destined for Imminent Judgment

E. (9:1-10) Vision of the Lord Beside the Altar – Doomed with No Escape

Wiersbe:

The end is coming (Amos 8:1-3)

God often used common objects to teach important spiritual truths, objects like pottery (Jer. 18-19), seed (Luke 8:11), yeast (Matt. 16:6, 11), and in this text, a basket of summer (ripe) fruit. Just as this fruit was ripe for eating, the nation of Israel was ripe for judgment. The Hebrew word translated “summer” or “ripe” in verse 1 (qayis) is similar to the word translated “end” in verse 2 (qes). It was the end of the harvest for the farmers, and it would be the end for Israel when the harvest of judgment came (see Jer. 1:11-12 for a similar lesson). “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Amos 8:2).

Why the end is coming (Amos 8:4-6)

The reason was simple: Israel had broken God’s Law and failed to live by His covenant. They trampled on the poor and needy and robbed them of the little they possessed (Amos 8:4), an indictment that Amos had often brought against the people (2:6-7; 4:1; 5:11-12). When they did business, the merchants used inaccurate measurements so they could rob their customers. The Law demanded that they use accurate weights and measures (Lev. 19:35-36; Deut 25:13-16), but they cared only for making as much money as possible. Added to their deception was their desecration of the Sabbath and the religious holy days. The worship of God interrupted their business, and they didn’t like it! These evil vendors would not only alter their weights and measures and inflate their prices, but they would also cheapen their products by mixing the sweepings of the threshing floor with the grain. You didn’t get pure grain; you got the chaff as well.

How the end is coming (Amos 8:7-14)

The prophet used four pictures to describe the terror of the coming judgment. The first was that of an earthquake (v. 8) with the land heaving like the rising waters of the Nile River. (The Nile rose about twenty-five feet during its annual flooding stage.) Even the land would shudder because of the people’s sins. Earlier Amos referred to an earthquake (1:1), but we aren’t sure whether it was the fulfillment of this prophecy.

God would also visit them with darkness (Amos 8:9), perhaps an eclipse. (There was one in 763 B.C.) The Day of the Lord will be a day of darkness (Isa. 13:9-10; Joel 2:30-31). The third picture is that of a funeral (Amos 8:10), with all their joyful feasts turned into mourning and wailing.

Finally, the judgment would be like a famine (vv. 11-14), not only of literal food but also of spiritual nourishment.

3. THE PROPHET AFFIRMS (AMOS 9:1-15)

In this final chapter of the book, the Prophet Amos shares four affirmations from the heart of the Lord—three of which deal with judgment and the fourth with mercy.

“I will strike!” (Amos 9:1)

In a vision, Amos saw the Lord standing by an altar and announcing that the worshipers would be slain because the building would be destroyed and fall upon them. This was probably not the temple in Jerusalem because Amos was sent to the Northern Kingdom of Israel; and when the Babylonians destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, it was by fire (Jer. 52:12-13). This may have been the king’s royal chapel at Bethel, although we don’t know what kind of building that was. God’s warning in Amos 3:13-15 seems to parallel this vision, describing what the Assyrian army would do when it entered the land.

The altar was the place of sacrifice and atonement, but God refused to accept their sacrifices and forgive their sins (5:21-23). Their man-made religion, carried on by unauthorized priests, was an abomination to the Lord; and He would now destroy it.

“I will search!” (Amos 9:2-4)

Any idolatrous worshiper who tried to escape would be tracked down and slain. Though they dug down into sheol, the realm of the dead, God would search them out; and if they could reach heaven, there would be no protection there. They couldn’t hide from God on the highest mountain or in the depths of the sea (see Ps. 139:7-12). Even if they were taken captive to a foreign land, He would find them and judge them. His eye would be upon them for judgment, not for blessing (33:18; 34:15; Rev. 6:12-17).

“I will destroy!” (Amos 9:5-10)

Nine times in his book, Amos calls God “the Lord of hosts,” that is, “the Lord of the armies of heaven and earth.” The people of Israel created their gods in their own image and held such a low view of Jehovah that they thought He would approve of their sinful ways.

Amos reminded them of the greatness of the God they thought they were worshiping. He is the God of creation, who can melt the earth with a touch and make the land rise and fall like the swelling of the Nile River. He controls the heavens, the earth, and the seas, and no one can stay His hand.

Jehovah is the God of history, who showed His great power by delivering the Jews from the bondage of Egypt (v. 7). He claimed them for His own people. Yet they turned against Him and went their own way. Therefore, He will have to treat the Jews (His special people) as He treats the Gentiles!

But He is always the God of mercy (vv. 8-10), who will keep His covenant with Abraham and his descendants and not destroy the nation. The nation would be sifted, and the sinners punished, but not one of His true worshipers would be lost.

“I will restore!” (Amos 9:11-15)

In contrast to God’s destroying the Israelite house of false worship, God will raise up the “hut” of David, thereby assuring a bright future for the people of Israel and Judah. Like a rickety

shack, David's dynasty was about to collapse. From the Babylonian Captivity to this present hour, there has been no Davidic king ruling over the Jews; and though a Jewish nation has been restored, they have no king, priest, temple, or sacrifice.

But one day, the Lord will restore, repair, and rebuild the dynasty of David and establish the kingdom He promised. When Jesus Christ comes again, the breach between Israel and Judah will be healed, and there will be one nation submitted to one King. God will bless the land and the people, and His people shall live in peace and security.⁶⁻⁴ It will be a time of peace and prosperity to the glory of the Lord.

Amos ends his prophecy with the wonderful promise that Israel shall be planted, protected, and never again pulled up from her land "says the Lord your God." Your God! What a great encouragement for the Jews to know that, in spite of their unbelief, their God will be faithful to keep His covenant promises.

Constable: [9:7] Rhetorically Yahweh asked if Israel was not just like other nations. It was in the sense that it was only one nation among many in the world that lived under His sovereign authority. It was like them too in that it was full of idolaters. The Ethiopians (Cushites) were a remote people in Amos' day, on the edge of the earth from an ancient Near Easterner's perspective, yet God watched over them. He had separated the Philistines from Caphtor (Crete; cf. Deut. 2:23) and the Syrians (Arameans) from Kir in Mesopotamia (cf. 1:5) just as He had led Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. The Philistines and Syrians were Israel's enemies, but God had done for them what He had done for Israel. He could justly send the Israelites into another part of the world since He had formerly relocated these other nations. The Israelites considered themselves superior because of their election, but really they were no better or less accountable than any other nation. By referring to the pagan nations at the end of the book, Amos came full circle having begun with oracles against these nations. Thus the emphasis on Yahweh's universal sovereignty brackets the rest of the contents like bookends.

(9:11-15) CONCLUSION: PROMISE OF MILLENNIAL RESTORATION

A. (:11-12) Rebuilding of Davidic Kingdom out of Jerusalem / Conversion of the Nations

*"In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David,
And wall up its breaches;
I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old;
That they may possess the remnant of Edom
And all the nations who are called by My name,'
Declares the Lord who does this."*

Note the use of Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15:16-18. James understands Amos to allow the present age of calling out the Gentiles after which ("*after this*") the Lord will reestablish the house (monarchy/rule) of David. It is therefore consistent that since there will be Gentiles "called by My name" that the Gentiles do not need to come into Israel through circumcision. The works of the law are not required for salvation.

<http://www.fellowshipbibleannarbor.org/BibleStudies/collegesundayschool/Sum2005/AmosOutline.pdf>

B. (:13) Time of Abundant, Unparalleled Prosperity

"Behold days are coming,' declares the Lord,

*‘When the plowman will overtake the reaper
And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;
When the mountains will drip sweet wine
And all the hills will be dissolved.’”*

Constable: In contrast to the images of judgment that Amos had painted throughout this book, days were coming when these terrible conditions would be reversed. The land would become so productive that farmers planting seed for the next harvest would push reapers of the same fields to finish their work so they could plant the next crop. Normally the Israelites plowed their fields in October and the reaping ended in May, but in the future reaping would still be going on in October because of the huge harvests. Wine-makers would similarly push the farmers to plant more vines. The grape harvest took place in August, and farmers planted new vines in November. Harvests would be so abundant that the gathering of one crop would not end before it was time to begin the new crop.

The mountains would be so full of fruitful grapevines that they could be described as dripping with sweet (the best) wine. All the hills would be dissolved in the sense of flowing down with produce, perhaps even washing the soil away with grape juice. This verse pictures the reversing of the curse that God pronounced on the earth at the Fall (Gen. 3:17-19). Instead of drought and famine (1:2; 4:6-8) there would be abundant harvests (cf. Lev. 26:3-5; Deut. 28:4-5, 8, 11-12). Even though these may be hyperbolic images, the point is clear.

C. (:14) Time of Rebuilding, Growth and Productivity in the Land

*“Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel,
And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them;
They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine,
And make gardens and eat their fruit.”*

D. (:15) Permanent Possession of the Promised Land

*“I will also plant them on their land,
And they will not again be rooted out from their land
Which I have given them,
Says the Lord your God.”*

Wiersbe: In contrast to God’s destroying the Israelite house of false worship, God will raise up the “hut” of David, thereby assuring a bright future for the people of Israel and Judah. Like a rickety shack, David’s dynasty was about to collapse. From the Babylonian Captivity to this present hour, there has been no Davidic king ruling over the Jews; and though a Jewish nation has been restored, they have no king, priest, temple, or sacrifice. But one day, the Lord will restore, repair, and rebuild the dynasty of David and establish the kingdom He promised. When Jesus Christ comes again, the breach between Israel and Judah will be healed, and there will be one nation submitted to one King. God will bless the land and the people, and His people shall live in peace and security.⁶⁻⁴ It will be a time of peace and prosperity to the glory of the Lord. Amos ends his prophecy with the wonderful promise that Israel shall be planted, protected, and never again pulled up from her land “says the Lord your God.” Your God! What a great encouragement for the Jews to know that, in spite of their unbelief, their God will be faithful to keep His covenant promises.

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Malick:

Message: Because of Israel's false worship and abuse of the poor, needy, and upright in the land, the Lord their God promises to judge the people and Jeroboam their king, as he will the nations around them, by leading his people into captivity; and yet he vows to also restore them some day to a time of permanent blessing in the land under a revitalized Davidic dynasty

Outline:

I. Introduction: Amos presents himself as a shepherd who was stirred through visions by God to speak judgment to Israel during the reigns of Uzziah in Judah and Jeroboam in Israel 1:1

II. After promising to judge the nations around Israel for their abusive treatment of others, the LORD promises to judge the combined nations of Israel for their disobedience to the Law and abuses to His/their own people 1:2--2:16

A. Lion: Through the imagery of a lion who attacks his prey, Amos speaks with the authority of the Lord from Jerusalem of upcoming judgment for Israel 1:2

B. Arameans: The LORD promises to judge the Arameans for their abusive treatment of those in Gilead 1:3-5

C. Philistines: The LORD promises to judge the Philistines because of their abusive treatment of captives sold to Edom in slavery 1:6-8

D. Tyre: The LORD promises to judge Tyre because of their abusive treatment of Israeli captives sold to Edom in slavery 1:9-10

E. Edom: The LORD promises to judge Edom because of their abusive treatment of their Israeli brothers 1:11-12

F. Ammon: The LORD promises to judge the people of Ammon because of their treatment of the people of Gilead (territory of Israel) 1:13-15

G. Moab: The LORD promises to judge the people of Moab because of their treatment of the King of Edom 2:1-3

H. Judah & Israel: The Lord promises to judge the combined nations of Israel because of their departure from the Law and thus their abuse of His/their own people 2:4-16

1. The LORD promises to judge Judah because of their rejection of the Law of the LORD 2:4-5

2. The LORD promises to Judge Israel because of her rebellion against Him through the abuse of His/their own people 2:6-16

III. Through oracles and a dirge the LORD proclaims to Israel that they should repent, but their coming judgment will certainly occur because of their arrogant sin against the weak and upright 3:1--6:14

A. Through an oracle the LORD God exhorts the nations to witness His coming judgment upon His chosen people Israel because of their sin after being in a special relation with Him 3:1-15

1. The LORD exhorts everyone in Israel to hear what He has to say 3:1
2. The LORD vows to punish them for their sin because of their special relationship with Him 3:2
3. Through a series of proverbs the LORD proclaims that the coming judgment is certain and must be proclaimed by His prophet 3:3-8
4. The LORD God of Hosts exhorts the Gentile nations to come and witness the coming judgment of Israel for her sins: idolatry, materialism, and abuse of power 3:9-15

B. Through an oracle the LORD proclaims a sever judgment on the women and men of Israel who continue in evil toward others and in worship in spite of discipline from the Lord 4:1-13

1. The LORD exhorts the “great (women)” of Israel who enter into evil with their husbands against the poor and needy to hear what He has to say-- the women will be brutally taken away into captivity with the men 4:1-3
2. Because of Israel’s continued choice to enter into profane worship in the face of God’s discipline, the Lord of Hosts will bring about even more sever judgment 4:4-13

C. In a dirge the Lord exhorts Israel to repent, but necessarily proclaims a coming judgment and exile at the hands of another nation for their arrogant and abusive sin against their own people 5:1--6:14

1. The House of Israel is exhorted to hear the word of the LORD which He takes up for her as a dirge 5:1
2. The LORD God proclaims that the Israel will be (90%) destroyed beyond repair 5:2-3
3. Israel is exhorted to repent of their evil and not to flee to their shrines lest they experience the consuming judgment of the great LORD of creation 5:4-9
4. The LORD pronounces judgment upon Israel for their abuse of the weak and righteous 5:10-14
5. Israel is exhorted to repent of their evil so that the Lord might be gracious to them, and yet judgment will be necessary 5:15-17
6. Israel is exhorted to not look for the Day of the Lord when God will go before His people because that time will require that He come to them in judgment 5:18-20
7. The God of Hosts proclaims that the nation Israel will go into captivity beyond Damascus because of her hypocritical actions historically and at this time 5:21-27
8. The LORD proclaims a woe upon the “great” of Israel who do evil with their power because they will be subjected to judgment and exile at the hands of another nation 6:1-14

IV. Through a series of three visions which are interrupted by a historical interlude illustrating the rebelliousness of the nation, and the resumption of a forth vision (note the 3 plus one motive from chapters 1--2), Amos proclaims the certain judgment leading to captivity which will come upon Israel for their abusive actions to the poor and needy in the land 7:1--9:6

A. Locust-swarm: In the vision of the locust-swarm which would destroy the crop of the people of Israel, Amos interceded for the nation, and the LORD God changed His mind 7:1-3

B. Fire: In a vision of fire which would destroy the people of Israel, Amos interceded for the nation and the LORD God again changed His mind 7:4-6

C. Plumb-line: In a vision of the plumb line which the LORD was holding to measure Israel Amos learns that the LORD is going to judge the nation and especially the house of Jeroboam for their corrupt worship 7:7-9

D. Historical Interlude: After Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, reported to Jeroboam the prophecies of judgment by Amos, and demanded that Amos leave Israel, Amos explained that he is only proclaiming the word of The LORD and thus proclaimed again the coming judgment and exile upon Israel for their rejection of the LORD's words 7:10-17

E. Picked ripe fruit: In a vision of ripe fruit which has been picked, Amos learns that the LORD God is going to bring about a thorough, humbling judgment upon Israel for her prideful abuse of the poor and the needy in the land 8:1-14

F. LORD'S image by fire: In the image of The LORD standing by the altar, Amos learns that Israel's judgment will begin at the centers of idolatry and thoroughly reach to all of the land by the hand of the Creator 9:1-6

V. Even through Israel will be judged as any other evil nation for their sin, The LORD their God promises to restore them in bountiful prosperity to the land one day 9:7-15

A. Even through Israel will be judged as any other evil nation will be judged for her sin, The LORD God promises not to totally destroy the house of Jacob 9:7-10

B. The LORD promises to raise up the falling house of David to possess all of those from the nations who will obey the LORD in a future day of restoration 9:11-12

C. The LORD Israel's God promises for there to be a future day when He will permanently restore the nation Israel to the land which will be abundant in blessing 9:13-15

http://bible.org/page.php?page_id=1019

Keathley:

Overview of Book:

- Seven speeches pronouncing Judgment.
- Five messages describing the reasons for the judgment and just how bad they were.
- Five visions to show how bad the judgment will be.

- Promise of restoration in the future.

AMOS

JUDGMENT								REASONS				RESULTS			RESTORATION						
DAMASCUS	GAZA	TYRE	EDOM	AMMON	MOAB	JUDAH	ISRAEL	THEME	GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE	HYPOCRISY	GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY	NO REPENTANCE	COMPLACEMENT	LOCUSTS	FIRE	PLUMBLINE	RIPE FRUIT	JUDGMENT	OF ISRAEL	OF ALL NATIONS	PERMANENTLY
1:3	1:5-5	9-10	11-12	13-15	2:1-3	4-5	6-10	1:1f	1:1f	5-1:17	18-27	6:1f	7:1	7:8	7-1:7	8:1f	9:1f	9-11	9:13	2:13-15	

Baxter: JUDGMENT FOR ABUSED PRIVILEGE

- I. Eight Burdens (1-2)
- II. Three Sermons (3-6)
- III. Five Visions (7-9)

James D. Price:

Introduction: 1:1-2

I. Amos Pronounced Eight Oracles of Judgment Against the Nations (1:3-2:16)

A. Damascus (= Syria) will be burned for war crimes (1:3-5)

Note the formula: "For three transgressions and four"

Probable meaning "Enough wickedness and more than enough for . . ."

1. Reason: Cruelty in war against Gilead

--in the days of Jehu (2 Kings 10:32-33; cf. 13:7)

2. Judgment: Fire will burn palaces; Captivity of rulers and people

B. Gaza (= Philistines) will be burned for slave traffic (1:6-8)

1. Reason: they carried captives, delivered them to Edom (as slaves)

--happened in the days of Joram (2 Chr. 21:16 ?)

2. Judgment: Fire will burn walls and palaces; Captivity for rulers, people

C. Tyrus (= Phoenicians) will be burned for slave traffic (9-10)

1. Reason: they delivered whole captivity to Edom (as slaves)

--They did not remember the covenant with David and Solomon
(2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kings 5:15-16)

2. Judgment: Fire will burn walls and palace

D. Edom will be burned for hatred of brothers (1:11-12)

--Esau was the brother of Jacob

1. Reason: they pursued their brother (Israel)

2. Judgment: Fire will burn the palaces

E. Ammon will be burned for war crimes against Gilead (1:13-15)
--Ammonites were descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew
1. Reason: they committed cruel war crimes against Gilead

2. Judgment: fire will burn their walls and palaces

F. Moab will be burned for taking vengeance against the dead king of Edom
(2:1-3)
--Moabites were descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew

1. Reason: they committed war crimes against Edom
 - burned king's bones in lime;
 - no reference in history
 - see war in 2 Kings 3
2. Judgment: fire will burn palaces; judges, princes, people will be killed

G. Judah will be burned for apostasy (2:4-5)

1. Reason: they committed crimes against God's Law
2. Judgment: fire will burn their palaces

H. Israel will be judged for multiple crimes (2:6-16)

1. Reasons:
 - a. They committed crimes against:
 - the righteous (sold into slavery) (6)
 - the poor (sold into slavery) (6-7)
 - the meek (7)
 - b. They committed idolatry (7-10)
 - c. They committed crimes against the prophets and Nazarites (11-12)
2. Judgment: none shall escape (13-16)
3. This oracle is theme of the book. The rest of the book elaborates this theme.

II. Amos Proclaimed Three Messages against Israel's Sin (chs. 3-6)

(Key words: "Hear ye this word! [3:1; 4:1; 5:1])

A. Amos proclaimed Israel's certain doom (ch. 3)

1. Israel's unique relationship with the LORD demands judgment of their sin (3:1-2)
2. The law of cause and effect demands judgment of Israel's sin (3:3-6)
 - Illustrated by five similes
 - a. Travelers and fellowship (3)
 - b. Lions and prey (4)
 - c. Snares and birds (5)
 - d. Alarms and fear (6a)
 - e. God and judgment (6b)
3. God is the source of the prophet's message (3:7-8)

4. Amos outlined five aspects of the judgment (3:9-15)
 - a. The Philistines and Egypt will witness it (9)
 - b. Israel's judgment is ripe (10)
 - They have stored up wrath (cf., Rom 2:4-5)
 - "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness . . ."
 - c. The adversary will destroy the palaces (11)
 - d. A remnant will be spared (12)
 - e. The altars and palaces will be destroyed (13-15)
- B. Amos rebuked Israel's foolish women (cows of Bashan) (ch. 4)
1. Amos listed three reasons for the judgment (4:1-5)
 - a. They oppressed the poor (1)
 - b. God swore by His Holiness (2-3)
 - (cf., Psa 89:35; 104:4; Amos 6:8; 8:9)
 - c. They engaged in idolatrous worship (4-5)
 2. Amos reminded Israel of five past judgments (4:6-11)
 - (note: 5 times repeated statement--"yet ye have not returned.")
 - a. Famine (6)
 - b. Drought (7-8)
 - c. Plagues (9)
 - d. Pestilence (10)
 - e. Destruction (11)
 - As Sodom and Gomorrah
 - a remnant will survive (cf., firebrand plucked Zech 3:2)
 3. Amos declared the certainty of the judgment (4:12-13)
 - a. He warned Israel to "prepare to meet thy God" (12)
 - "thus will I do" is not defined
 - perhaps it refers to 4:11
 - perhaps it refers to 3:11
 - b. The judge is the Sovereign Judge (13)
- C. Amos rebuked Israel's false worship (chs. 5-6)
1. Israel's fall will be permanent (5:1-3)
 - (note the remnant--vs. 3)

2. Amos pleaded 5 times for Israel's repentance (5:4-15)
 - a. Seek the LORD and live! (5:4)
 - b. Seek not Bethel or Gilgal (5:5)
 - c. Seek the LORD and live! (5:6-7)
 - d. Seek the Sovereign Creator (5:8-13)
 - e. Seek good and not evil (5:14-15)

3. Amos warned of the Day of the Lord (5:16-20)
 - a. It will be a day of mourning 16-17
 - b. It will be an undesirable day (18-20)
 - Note Woe # 1: Woe to those desiring the Day of the Lord (18)
 - (cf. 6:3)

4. Amos described Israel's false worship (5:21-27)
 - a. God despised their worship (21-23)
 - their holidays (21)
 - their sacrifices (22)
 - their music (23)

 - b. God desired justice and righteousness (5:24)

 - c. God denounced their false worship (5:25-26)
 - their false worship in the wilderness (25)
 - their idolatry from that time (26)

5. Amos rebuked Israel's false security (ch. 6)
 - a. Israel trusted in false sources of security (6:1-6)
 - the mountain of Samaria (1-2)
 - the delay of God's judgment (3)
 - (Note Woe # 2 on those who delay the Day of the Lord)
 - their own prosperity (4-6)
 - b. Israel's captivity is certain (6:7-14)
 - Note God's oath (6:8; cf., 4:2)

III. Amos Received Five Visions of Israel's Judgment (chs. 7-9)

- A. He saw a vision of a grasshopper plague (7:1-3)
 - the Lord relented
- B. He saw a vision of judgment by fire (7:4-6)
 - the Lord relented
- C. He saw a vision of a plumbline (7:7-9)
 - the Lord did not relent
- D. Parenthesis: the priest Amaziah rebuked Amos (7:10-17)
 1. Amaziah told Amos to go home (10-13)
 2. Amos refused to turn back from his mission (14-17)
 - (Note: the doctrine of inspiration)
- E. He saw a vision of summer fruits (8:1-14)
 1. The end is come (1-2)
 2. The Lord has sworn an oath (8:7; cf., 6:8; 4:2)
 3. There will be signs in heaven (9)
 - (eclipse of the nation symbolized ??)
 4. There will be a famine of God's Word (11-12)
- F. He saw a vision of the altar, smitten due to sin (9:1-10)

- G. Amos announced a Messianic promise (9:11-15)

http://jamesdprice.com/images/Outline_of_Amos.doc

Listing of links to resources about Book of Amos

<http://www.tunemyheart.net/biblelinks/ot/amos.html>

Stedman: God Doesn't Play Favorites

Amos went about delivering God's message in a very interesting way. If you had a map of Israel and could locate the countries that are mentioned here, and if you put Israel right in the center of the map, you would find that Amos is going around the boundaries of Israel in various directions, delivering a message concerning all the neighboring nations. He begins first in chapter 1 with Damascus. That is way up in the northeast section above Israel. He delivers to Damascus a message showing Israel how God has judged Damascus, especially for the people's cruelty. Then he moves way down on the west coast to the ancient land of Philistia, or what is called here the land of Gaza. And once again he reminds Israel that God has judged this land. Why? Because the

people have participated in an active slave trade.

Then he moves back up the coast to the land of Tyre, on the northwest side of Israel, and here he points out how God had judged this country because the people had broken their agreements. Then he moves on down to the far south of Israel to the land of Edom, the ancient country of Esau, and here he points out how God's judgment had fallen upon this nation because of the people's unforgiving spirit and their implacable hatred of Israel. Then he moves back up the east side of Israel to the land of Ammon. (By the way, Ammon is now the country of Jordan and its capital is the capital of ancient Ammon.) Here he points out that God had judged this section of the country because of its cupidity, its greed, its hunger for land of others. Then south to Moab, still on the side of Israel, God had judged Moab, he says, because of its hatred against Israel. And then he comes to the Southern Kingdom, Judah itself, and in a brief reference points out that because Judah has despised God's law, the judgment of God had fallen on it. At last he arrives right at the ten-kingdom northern nation of Israel, and here he announces that God is going to judge them for corruption and for injustice in their hearts. . .

The message of this book is that God is relentless when he begins to deal with man. He will not make peace. He will not compromise. When he begins to deal with a nation, he insists on absolute values. When he begins to deal with an individual, he deals with absolute values. Just the fact that we are Christians does not mean that we escape the condemnation of the judgment of the Word of God in those areas where we are attempting to compromise. Just because we have been Christians for 40 years doesn't change the relentlessness of the Word of God as it searches and probes our hearts and lives. God doesn't change.

The word of this prophet is that we are dealing with a God of righteousness and of unbending, inflexible zeal who will not compromise in any way, and yet, our God is a God of patience and of love. The marvelous undertone of this book, as through all the prophets, is that of the outpouring of the love of God's heart moving toward the well-being and the happiness of humanity, breaking out every now and then into beautiful forms of expression. Undergirding the whole book is the promise at last to bring Israel -- and likewise all the people of God -- into the day when man shall live in peace and joy, with blessings to fill the hearts of men. What a message of the impartiality of God's grace this is!

Douglas Smith: A Suggested Outline of the Book of Amos

(Adapted from: Be Concerned by Warren Wiersbe)

Key theme: A call for justice, a warning of judgments

Key verse: Amos 5:24 (ESV)

“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

I. Look around and see God's judgment—1-2 -- Eight nations judged

1. Six Gentile nations condemned—1:1-2:3

2. Judah condemned—2:4-5

3. Israel condemned—2:6-16

II. Look within and see the corruption—3-6 -- Three sermons to the people of Israel

1. Message 1: Israel's judgment certain—3:1-15

2. Message 2: Israel's sins denounced—4:1-13

3. Message 3: Israel's doom lamented—5:1-6:14

III. Look ahead and see the end coming—7-9

1. Five visions of judgment—7:1-9:10

(1) The locusts—7:1-3

- (2) The fire—7:4-6
- (3) The plumb line—7:7-9
- Historical interlude: Amos at Bethel—7:10-17
- (4) The basket of summer fruit—8:1-14
- (5) The ruined temple—9:1-10
- 2. A vision of the glorious kingdom—9:11-15

MacArthur: Amos addresses Israel's two primary sins:

- 1) an absence of true worship, and
- 2) a lack of justice.

In the midst of their ritualistic performance of worship, they were not pursuing the Lord with their hearts (4:4,5; 5:4-6) nor following His standard of justice with their neighbors (5:10-13; 6:12). This apostasy, evidenced by continual, willful rejection of the prophetic message of Amos, is promised divine judgment. Because of His covenant, however, the Lord will not abandon Israel altogether, but will bring future restoration to the righteous remnant (9:7-15).

Holwick: Main sins of Amos's society:

A. Pride of the government.

- 1) Complacency rampant. 6:1
 - a) Biggest and best. 6:2
 - b) Militarism. "We're number one!" 6:13
- 2) Amos's answer in chapter 2:
 - a) Neighboring pagan countries condemned.
 - b) His own country rounds out the list! 2:6

B. Corruption of the court system.

- 1) Deny justice to oppressed. 2:7
 - a) Corruption of the courts.
- 2) Despise rebukers, truthful people. 5:10
 - a) Gates were areas for courts. 5:10
 - 1> Trials were informal.
 - A> An elder as judge.
 - B> Prominent citizens as jury.
 - 2> Integrity important, and lacking.
 - b) Those who rebuked or reproved the courts for shoddy justice were despised. (5:10)
- 3) Take brides, oppress poor. 5:12
 - a) One thing made it work - bribery. 5:12
 - b) Justice turned to poison. 6:12
- 4) Prudent keep quiet. 5:13
 - a) Maintain justice! 5:15

C. Ostentatious wealth.

- 1) Rich mansions, decorated with ivory. (Archeology) 3:15; 6:4
 - a) Ivory beds, fattened lambs, music, wine, perfume. 6:4-6
 - b) Mansions, lush vineyards. 5:11
- 2) Cows of Bashan. "Get us a drink!" 4:1
 - a) Yuppies. 8:13

D. Oppression of the poor.

- 1) Dishonest scales, business practices. 8:5
 - a) Needy sold for a pair of sandals. 2:6; 8:6
- 2) Trample poor, force to give grain. 5:11 (2:7)
 - a) Rich have made poor into sharecroppers.
 - 1> Land laws strict in Moses' day.
 - A> Each family guaranteed land.
 - B> Could not be sold.
 - 2> Rich overturned it.
 - A> Story of Naboth and Ahab\Jezebel. 1 Kings 21
 - b) Rich end up richer, poor driven from land. 8:4

Kapteyn: Reasons for judgment - because of how they treated God and fellow man.

a. Their worship was empty - did not seek God, only pay lip service to God.

- i. Believed if they went thru the rituals of religion they would live. Focus on form of religion rather than substance.
- ii. God tells them to seek Him and they will live.
- iii. Danger occurs when church becomes a convenience, a man-made structure which serves only worldly needs and does not gather to praise the majesty of God and to seek His will as found in Word, it no longer is a source of life.
- iv. We can go through motions, perhaps even convincing ourselves that we have a strong relationship with God on Sunday mornings and then forgetting about that relationship the rest of the week.
- v. We can even follow the law of God and fail to have a strong relationship with Him - as per Pharisees. In Luke 13, they became indignant when Jesus healed a crippled woman on the Sabbath.

b. What made God hate their worship even more was that they did not have proper relationships with one another.

- i. vs.7 - they turned justice into bitterness; vs.12 - they turned the fruit of righteousness into bitterness
- ii. Compare these passages we see that justice is the fruit of righteousness. If we are righteous we will seek justice for others.
- iii. Justice can be defined as righteousness in action. Means having proper relationships with one another.
- iv. People were unjust and so their worship was rejected. Amos urges them to maintain justice in the courts.
- v. vs. 10 - they hated honest judges and despised people who told the truth. They trampled on the poor to obtain their riches and build their mansions and plant lush

vineyards.

vi. God does not rebuke them because of their riches but the way they got their riches.
(v.11)

vii. Poor were forced to sell their land to the rich and then they were allowed to farm the land if they gave most of their grain to the rich land owners.

viii. Rich controlled courts and a class system emerged.

Piper: These were days of outward prosperity in Israel, but from a spiritual standpoint these were terrible times. Amos was sent right to the center of corruption, namely, the cult city of Bethel.

Back when Jeroboam led the break away of the ten northern tribes from the two southern ones, he made Bethel his alternative worship center to Jerusalem. 1 Kings 12:32-33 describe why this became a great evil in Israel.

Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices upon the altar; so he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. He went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and he ordained a feast for the people of Israel, and went up to the altar to burn incense.

So Jeroboam had built high places of worship in Bethel and put up idols in the form of calves and set up his own priesthood and new holy days. So what had begun centuries earlier as a holy place, where Abraham and Jacob had met God, was now the center of idolatry in Israel. And God called Amos to go cry against the corruption of Israel and against Bethel and the kind of worship that was going on there. . .

The judgment of God is coming in a decisive way and there is no averting it. But there seems to be one last hope. Prepare! Get ready! Prepare to meet your God. If you would not prepare to meet him in holiness and truth at Bethel, then at least prepare now for this final meeting in judgment. For after this there will be no more chance to prepare.

So draw from Amos' prophecy this morning this truth: When we come to meet God (whether in worship at [our local church], or in judgment at the last day) we should prepare.

So let me summarize four ways I see in this text that we are to prepare to meet God . . .

1. First, you should prepare to meet God in worship by going to a church where truth is honored as a very high premium. . .

2. The second preparation for worship is that we renounce all known sin in our lives before coming to worship God. . .

3. The third preparation for worship is that we take note of how god has been trying to get our attention.

Five times in Amos 4 God says that he had done specific things in the lives of his people to turn them back to himself. And five times it says, "Yet you did not return to me." Each of these things God had done to get their attention could be explained as natural events with no divine cause. But God holds Israel accountable to listen and respond. That's the meaning of "Yet you did not return to me."

In not hearing the voice of God, or seeing the hand of God, Israel failed to prepare to meet him. That is what we must not do. We must wake up and stop looking at our lives like secular, scientific, western naturalists. God is doing things in your life which are gracious providential messages to return to him and trust him. That is the third way we prepare to meet him in worship. Take note of what he has been saying to us in our lives to draw us to himself.

4. Finally, we prepare for worship by drawing near to God in our hearts.

When God said five times, "You did not return to me," he did not mean that they should have come more often to the place of worship. The returning was not a physical movement. Returning to God was a movement of the heart, not a movement of the body. There is a heart preparation to be done in order to meet God.

Jesus said, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matt. 15:8). When this is the case the preparation needed is a movement of the heart from far to near, and yet it is a movement that is not measured in inches or miles.

-- It is measured with the tape of attention -- you may not even be thinking of God Saturday night or Sunday morning. So your heart is far from him measured by attention.

-- Or it may be measured by the tape of focus -- you may have some attention on God but it is broken up by other things and there is no focused attention that gets God clearly in view and makes him the primary object of attention.

-- It is measured by the tape of desire -- you may feel little desire for God but be very much caught up in a greater desire for sports or finances or a trip to the lake, while the desire and the longing for God is weak by comparison.

-- Or it can be measured by the tape of trust and hope -- your trust in God may be weak and your hope faint and wavering.

-- Or it may be measured by the tape of delight or joy in God -- you may feel much more pleasure Saturday night in a late movie than in meeting God in the morning.