

injustices; 4) Abuse of wealth; 5) Intemperance; 6) Dishonest business practices; 7) Superficial optimism; 8) Indifference to basic needs of their fellows; 9) Heartless oppression; 10) Urban emphasis.

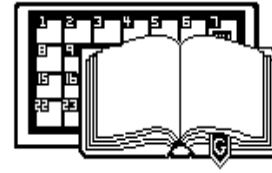
B. A picture of the religious conditions: (See Amos 2:4-8, 12; 3:10; 4:1-5; 5:1-27; 6:3-6; 8:4-6). 1) A shallow and distorted conception of God; 2) A worship vitiated by ceremonialism; 3) A worship polluted by immorality; 4) A worship corrupted by false teaching; 5) Shallow complacency; 6) Public and private virtues disintegrated; 7) Self-deception; 8) Nauseating arrogance; 9) Rebuke was not tolerated; 10) Religious professionalism.

C. Testimony to history: The book confirms many historical statements of other books.

D. Some lessons from the book of Amos:

- 1) All nations of the world are responsible to Almighty God (ch. 1 & 2).
- 2) Inhumanity to man is sin (1:3 - 2:16)
- 3) False doctrine, immorality, and ceremonialism destroy true worship (5:18-27).
- 4) Dishonest business practices stand condemned by the highest court in the universe (8:4-6).
- 5) Special privileges embrace added responsibility (3:2).
- 6) Ingratitude is sin (2:9-12).
- 7) It is a tragedy when God must summon the world to witness the worldliness of his people (3:9).
- 8) Unbrotherliness is an abomination (1:11)
- 9) We should properly respect the dead (2:1).
- 10) Even heathen nations stand condemned for their senseless brutalities inflicted in war (1:3 ff).
- 11) Ostentatious giving is unacceptable to God (4:5).
- 12) The day of judgment cannot be wished away (6:3)
- 13) Going to church is no substitute for the right attitude in church (8:4-6).
- 14) Righteousness has no substitute (5:24).
- 15) "Prepare to meet thy God" (4:12).
- 16) Messianic prophecy is sometimes clothed in Mosaic terminology (9:11-15).
- 17) The prophet Amos exemplifies the proper spirit of a man of God in the face of corrupt social and religious leaders (7:10-17).

-- Windell Gann



AMOS

Lesson #1

AMOS -- The Shepherd Prophet

I. THE PROPHET

Name: Amos's name means "burden bearer." He is the only one in the Old Testament with this name. The Amos mentioned in the genealogy of Luke (3:25) is otherwise unknown. Some get Amos confused with the father of Isaiah (Isaiah 1:1).

His Home: Amos was from Tekoa, about six miles south from Bethlehem. It is on a hill 2,700 feet high overlooking the wilderness of Judah. It was made a "city for defense" by Rehoboam (2 Chron. 11:6). The town's name is used frequently in the sense of sounding an alarm with the trumpet: e.g. "Blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem" (Jer. 6:1). Tekoa is the pasture-ground for large flocks of sheep and goats. From high ground on which the village stands one can look eastward and see the Dead Sea 18 miles away and 4,000 feet below you.

Personal History: Amos was not a prophet by profession, nor the son of a prophet (Amos 7:14). He was "among the herdmen of Tekoa" (1:1). The term "herdmen" refers to a special, ugly breed of sheep with a fine short wool. He was also a dresser of sycamore tress (7:14). The word "dresser" occurs only here and is reference to a squeezing of the sycamore fig to accelerate ripening and make it more palatable.

His Preparation: Nothing is said of any special preparation of the prophet for his work. "The Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (7:15). He puts himself in line with all the prophets who claim a direct revelation from God. The mention of his prophetic call in association with his occupation is significant. There was no period interposed between the one and the other. The herdsman was prepared for his task when God called him. His preparation is shown by:

1. Knowledge of God -- He knew the character of the God in whose name he is called to speak.

- a. God's presence is boundless -- 9:2.
- b. God's power is infinite -- 8:9f.
- c. He controls the forces of nature -- ch. 4, 5:8f.
- d. Guides movements and destinies of nations -- 6:1f.
- e. God is righteous in all His ways, dealing with nations on moral principles -- 1:3ff; 2:1ff.

The call to speak in God's name may have come suddenly, but the prophet's conception of the character of God is not a new or sudden revelation but a firm and well-established conviction.

2. Acquaintance with the history of his people -- His book shows that not only was he well acquainted with the history and traditions of his nations, but he takes it for granted that his hearers are too. It is evident also that Amos had reflected upon these things and realized their significance.

3. Personal Travel -- Amos reveals an accurate acquaintance with contemporary life and conditions in the nations around Judah. It may have been that as a wool-merchant or flock-master he had visited the towns and markets mentioned and may have talked with many foreign merchants.

4. Scenery of his home -- We must not overlook another factor in his preparation, the scenery around his home and his occupation. The landscape was one to make a solemn impression on a reflective mind. The wide-spreading desert, the shimmering waters of the Dead Sea, the high wall of the distant hills of Moab. The silent life of the desert, tending to his flock, defending them from the ravages of wild beasts, would to one whose thoughts were full of God nourish that exalted view of the Divine Majesty which we find in his book. As he is taken from following the flock he comes using the language and figures of his daily life (3:12).

5. His Mission -- Through he lived in the south part of Judah he was called to go and prophesy unto the people of Israel and appears at Bethel, the religious capital of the Northern Kingdom. Thus he travels about 25 miles north to do his preaching as God bids. It is the manner of God's prophets to appear where they are most needed. The Northern Kingdom about this time had come victorious out of war and had reached its culmination of wealth accompanied by luxury and excess. He met the opposition of the high priest Amaziah who reported the prophet to Jeroboam II and consequently Amos was ordered out of the country.

The Date: The date of Amos' work can be fixed approximately from the information of verse one. Both Uzziah and Jeroboam II had long reigns. Uzziah from 790-739 BC and Jeroboam II from 783-753 BC. We can place the work of Amos about 760 BC. This would be about 30 years before the fall of Israel to the Assyrians (Samaria fell in 722 BC).

In a country where earthquakes are not uncommon the one here mentioned must have been unusually severe for people 300 years later were referring to it (Zech. 14:5). (Josephus informs us, we do not know how reliably, that it took place in connection with Uzziah's trespass reported in 2 Chron. 26.)

We are not told how long Amos exercised his ministry. In all probability the book is the written series of addresses he delivered at Bethel until he was ordered to leave the country. We can imagine that he put his messages into writing in condensed form and allowed them to continue to circulate in this book form.

Amos' Contemporaries: Older men that Amos may have known includes Jonah and Elisha. He may have heard them preach. Joel may have been about the same age preaching in Judah. Younger men who may have heard Amos include Hosea, a young co-worker with Amos in the northern kingdom, and Micah and Isaiah young men in Judah. These prophets make up "The Golden Age" of Hebrew prophecy when these many prophets of the 8th century BC come onto the scene.

II. THE BOOK

Its Divisions: The style of Amos and the purity of his Hebrew is a very eloquent and beautiful thing. The arrangements of the Book is clear and simple. The text has been faithfully preserved.

Outline:

1. God's Judgment Upon Surrounding Nations -- ch. 1 & 2
(Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah)
2. Judgment Upon Israel Expanded -- 3:1 - 6:14
3. Symbolic Predictions of God's Judgment -- 7:1 - 9:10
4. The Promise of Glorious Restoration -- 9:11-15

Values of the Book: The book, like that of Hosea, gives us a picture of the times.

A. A picture of social conditions: (See Amos 2:6-8; 3:15; 4:1; 5:7, 10, 11-13; 6:3-6). 1) Misuse of authority; 2) Corrupt government; 3) Social