

LIFE-STUDY OF AMOS

MESSAGE ONE

THE INTRODUCTORY WORD, JEHOVAH'S JUDGMENTS ON THE SURROUNDING NATIONS, AND HIS JUDGMENTS ON JUDAH AND ISRAEL

Scripture Reading: Amos 1:1—2:16

The book of Amos, as one of the Minor Prophets, also covers the chastisement of Israel and the punishment upon the nations to bring in the manifestation of Christ, issuing in the restoration, which consummates in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth.

In this message we will cover three matters: the introductory word, Jehovah's judgments on the surrounding nations, and His judgments on Judah and Israel.

I. THE INTRODUCTORY WORD

The introductory word is in 1:1-2.

A. The Meaning of the Name Amos

Amos in Hebrew means "burden bearer."

B. The Time of Amos's Ministry

The time of Amos's ministry was about 787 B.C. (1:1a).

C. The Object of His Ministry

The object of his ministry was the northern kingdom of Israel (1:1b).

D. The Place of His Ministry

The place of his ministry was Bethel in the northern kingdom of Israel.

E. The Subject

The subject of the book of Amos is Jehovah's judgments on Israel and the surrounding nations, with the issue of restoration.

F. The Central Thought

The central thought of the prophecy of Amos, which is nearly the same as that of Hosea and Joel, is that Jehovah punishes the nations, taking Israel as the center, that the age of restoration (Matt. 19:28) may be brought in for the kingdom of David—the kingdom of Christ (Rev. 11:15).

G. The Revelation concerning Christ

In the book of Amos the revelation concerning Christ is implied in the tabernacle of David, the kingdom of David, which is a type of the kingdom of Christ (Amos 9:11-12; cf. Acts 15:16-17).

H. The Sections

The book of Amos has five sections: the introductory word (1:1-2); Jehovah's judgments on the surrounding nations (1:3—2:3); Jehovah's judgments on Judah and Israel (2:4-16); Jehovah's contending with the house of Jacob (3:1—9:10), including Jehovah's three reproofs to Israel (3:1—5:27) and the plagues of the five signs seen by Amos (6:1—9:10); and the restoration of the house of Israel, with the rebuilding of the fallen tabernacle of David for the kingdom of Christ (9:11-15).

II. JEHOVAH'S JUDGMENTS ON THE SURROUNDING NATIONS

In 1:3—2:3 we have Jehovah's judgments on the surrounding nations.

A. On Damascus

In 1:3-5 the prophet speaks concerning Damascus.

1. Its Repeated Transgressions

The words "because of three transgressions of Damascus" and "because of four" indicate repeated transgressions (v. 3a).

Damascus was to be judged for its repeated transgressions—for its threshing Gilead with sharp threshing tools of iron (v. 3b).

2. *Jehovah's Punishment*

Jehovah would send fire into the house of the king and devour the palaces of the king. Also, he would break its bar and cut off the inhabitant and the one in power, and put the people into captivity (vv. 4-5).

B. On Gaza

In verses 6 through 8 we see Jehovah's judgment on Gaza.

1. *Its Repeated Transgressions*

Gaza would be judged for its repeated transgressions. Gaza carried away captive the entire captivity in order to deliver them up to Edom, a synonym of Esau (v. 6).

2. *Jehovah's Punishment*

Gaza's sin offended God to the uttermost. Verses 7 and 8 say that He would send fire to the city of Gaza to devour its palaces and that He would cut off the inhabitant and the one in power and cause the remnant of the Philistines to perish.

C. On Tyre

In verses 9 and 10 the prophet goes on to speak concerning Tyre.

1. *Its Repeated Transgressions*

Tyre also would be judged for its repeated transgressions in delivering up the captivity of Israel to Edom and not remembering a covenant among brothers, the covenant among Esau and Jacob (v. 9).

2. *Jehovah's Punishment*

In His punishment of the city of Tyre, Jehovah would send fire to the city, and it would devour its palaces (v. 10).

D. On Edom

In verses 11 and 12 we have Jehovah's judgment on Edom.

1. Its Repeated Transgressions

Edom's repeated transgressions were related to pursuing his brother (Jacob) with the sword, stifling his compassions, causing his anger to rage continually, and keeping his overflowing wrath perpetually (v. 11).

2. Jehovah's Punishment

In His punishment of Edom, Jehovah would send fire upon it and devour the palaces of its capital (v. 12).

E. On Ammon

Verses 13 through 15 deal with Jehovah's judgment on Ammon.

1. Its Repeated Transgressions

Ammon (a son of Lot by incest) ripped up the pregnant women of Gilead in order to enlarge their border (v. 13).

2. Jehovah's Punishment

Jehovah would kindle a fire in the capital, and it would devour its palaces with shouting in the day of battle and a tempest in the day of the storm wind (v. 14). Also, their king and his princes would go into captivity (v. 15).

F. On Moab

In 2:1-3 we have a word regarding Moab.

1. Its Repeated Transgressions

Moab (also a son of Lot by incest) burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime (v. 1).

2. Jehovah's Punishment

Jehovah would send fire upon Moab and devour the palaces of its capital. He would cause Moab to die with a crash, with shouting, and with the sound of a trumpet. Furthermore, He would cut off its judge and slay all its princes with him (vv. 2-3).

III. JEHOVAH'S JUDGMENTS ON JUDAH AND ISRAEL

Amos 2:4-16 is a record of Jehovah's judgments on Judah (vv. 4-5) and Israel (vv. 6-16).

A. On Judah

1. Its Repeated Transgressions

Jehovah's judgment on Judah was due to their rejecting the law of Jehovah and not keeping His statutes and due to their following their fathers to lie (v. 4). Judah's lies caused them to err.

2. Jehovah's Punishment

Jehovah's punishment of Judah was to send fire upon Judah, a fire that would devour the palaces of Jerusalem (v. 5).

B. On Israel

1. Their Repeated Transgressions

Jehovah's judgment on Israel was due to their having sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals (v. 6), panting after the dust of the earth upon the heads of the poor (v. 7a), and turning aside the way of the meek (v. 7b). Israel also transgressed in that a man and his father went in unto the same woman, in order to profane Jehovah's holy name (v. 7c). Upon garments taken as pledge, Israel lay themselves down beside every altar (v. 8a). The poor were so destitute when borrowing money that they would give their bedding as a pledge. The person who took the pledge would then spread the bedding around an altar as he worshipped idols. This was evil in the eyes of God. Moreover, in the house (the temple) of their God, Israel drank the wine of those who had been fined (v. 8b). They also made the Nazarites drink wine and commanded the prophets not to prophesy (vv. 9-12). The prophets and the Nazarites were the holy people raised up by God, but these holy people were damaged because Israel charged the prophets not to prophesy and seduced the Nazarites to drink wine.

2. *Jehovah's Punishment*

In His punishment, Jehovah would press on Israel like a cart that is full of sheaves (v. 13). Flight would perish from the swift; the strong would not strengthen his force, nor would the mighty deliver his soul. He who wielded the bow would not stand, he who was swift of foot would not deliver himself, and he who rode the horse would not deliver his soul (vv. 14-15). Finally, Jehovah declared that he who was stout-hearted among the mighty men would flee away naked in that day (v. 16). As these verses make clear, when God comes in to judge, there is no way to escape.

LIFE-STUDY OF AMOS

MESSAGE TWO

JEHOVAH'S CONTENDING WITH THE HOUSE OF JACOB

(1)

Scripture Reading: Amos 3—5

In this message we will begin to consider Jehovah's contending with the house of Jacob.

I. JEHOVAH'S THREE REPROOFS TO ISRAEL

The content of 3:1—5:27 is Jehovah's three reproofs to Israel.

A. The First Reproof

The first reproof is recorded in chapter three.

1. Jehovah's Word against the Whole Family of Israel

Amos 3:1 indicates that the word in this chapter is Jehovah's word against the whole family of Israel, which He brought up from Egypt.

2. Israel Being the Only Family of the Earth Whom Jehovah Has Known

Verse 2 says that since Israel was the only family of the earth whom Jehovah has known, He would visit upon them (judge them for) all their iniquities.

3. The Cause of Jehovah's Visitation

Verses 3 through 8 indicate that the cause of Jehovah's visitation (punishment) was that Israel was not one with God. They had their own intention, goal, and purpose, and God had His. But God revealed all His secrets to His prophets. Israel, therefore, should have listened to the prophets.

4. The Oppressions, Violence, and Devastation in Samaria and Jehovah's Visitation

Verses 9 through 12 go on to speak of the oppressions, violence, and devastation in Samaria and Jehovah's visitation.

5. The Transgressions of Israel at the Altars of Bethel and Jehovah's Visitation

In verses 13 through 15 we have the transgressions of Israel at the altars of Bethel and Jehovah's visitation. Bethel had become a place for the worship of idols. The winter house and the summer house in verse 15 were luxurious retreat houses. Here, such houses and the worship of idols are regarded as one thing. Those who went to the retreat houses for enjoyment were also those who worshipped idols at the altars of Bethel.

B. The Second Reproof

Jehovah's second reproof to Israel is in chapter four.

1. The Oppression on the Poor and the Crushing of the Needy in Samaria and Jehovah's Visitation

Jehovah reproofed Israel for oppressing the poor and crushing the needy and for saying to their lords, "Bring, and let us drink" (v. 1). On the one hand, they oppressed the poor, crushed the needy, and indulged themselves in pleasures. On the other hand, they were under God's judgment (vv. 2-3).

2. Israel's Idol Worship in Bethel and Gilgal

Verses 4 and 5 are concerned with Israel's idol worship in Bethel and Gilgal.

3. Jehovah's Visitation with the Expectation of Israel's Return to Him

In verses 6 through 13 the prophet speaks regarding Jehovah's visitation with the expectation of Israel's return to Him and their preparation to meet Him who is the Creator and Ruler of all things.

C. The Third Reproof

In chapter five we have Jehovah's third reproof to Israel, the strongest of the three reproofs.

1. A Lamentation Taken Up by Jehovah over the House of Israel

Verse 1 indicates that the third reproof is a lamentation taken up by Jehovah over the house of Israel.

2. Israel's Fall and Defeat

"Fallen and no more to rise / Is the virgin of Israel; / She has been cast down upon her land; / There is none to raise her up. / For thus says the Lord Jehovah, / The city that sent forth a thousand / Will have a hundred left, / And that which sent forth a hundred / Will have ten left, / To the house of Israel" (vv. 2-3). This is a word concerning Israel's fall and defeat in war.

3. Jehovah Advising Israel to Seek Him and Live

In verses 4 through 9 Jehovah advises Israel to seek Him and live. They should not seek Bethel nor go to Gilgal, both of which would be under Jehovah's visitation.

Verse 7 says, "They turn justice to wormwood / And thrust righteousness down to the ground." This means that the leaders did not care for justice and righteousness and did not care for the people according to the law of God. Instead, they turned justice into something bitter and cast righteousness to the ground.

Verses 8 and 9 continue, "He who makes the Pleiades and Orion / And turns the shadow of death into the morning / And darkens the day with the night; / He who calls for the water of the sea / And pours it upon the surface of the earth, / Jehovah is His name, / Who causes destruction to flash forth upon the strong, / So that destruction comes upon the fortress." Since God can do these things, Israel should be advised to seek Him and live.

**4. Israel's Transgressions of Injustice
in Spite of Their Hypocritical Services
with Offerings to Jehovah, and Jehovah's Visitation**

Verses 10 through 27 describe Israel's transgressions of injustice in spite of their hypocritical services with offerings to Jehovah, and Jehovah's visitation. They hated him who reproved in the gate, the place where the leading ones exercised judgment, and they abhorred the one who spoke with integrity (v. 10). They took a forced gift (a bribe) from the poor (v. 11). Their transgressions were many, and their sins were mighty (awful). Eventually, the day of Jehovah will come upon them, a horrible day, and they will suffer woe, for it will be darkness to them and not light (vv. 16-20).

On the one hand, the people of Israel were evil; on the other hand, they still worshipped God with offerings. They liked to have the feasts and to assemble for the worship of God. Because of their hypocrisy, Jehovah said to them, "I hate, I despise your feasts, / And I will not delight in your solemn assemblies" (v. 21). He went on to tell them to take away from Him the noise of their songs and "let justice roll down like water, / And righteousness, like an ever-flowing river" (vv. 23-24). Instead of making noise and singing songs, they should exercise justice and practice righteousness.

All the Prophets are on the same subject, but each one gives a different picture from a different angle or with a different aspect. By reading all the Prophets we can realize how evil the children of Israel were and how loving God was toward them.

Beginning approximately two hundred years before the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, God sent the prophets to warn Israel, to advise them, and to call them to return to God. However, Israel did not listen to the prophets. This forced God to send the four kinds of locusts (Joel 1:4) to chastise Israel for twenty-seven centuries. From this we all need to learn an important lesson: God means business. For twenty-seven centuries God has been sending locusts to deal with Israel. Today the Roman Empire is still consuming Israel, and Israel continues to suffer.

In the midst of such a situation, God has done something

marvelous. First, He came to be incarnated as a man, and He lived on earth to set up a model of how to have the divine life expressed in humanity, of how to have the divine attributes expressed in the human virtues. Then He died a particular death for our sins, and He entered into resurrection and ascended. Then He was poured out as the Spirit in His descension to be one with us to produce a corporate Christ, that is, the Body of Christ.

All these things are mysterious. No one can see them. But these are the things that accomplished God's economy. The chastising of Israel and the judgment on the nations are the "shell"; they are not the "kernel." The kernel is the mysterious things in the age of mystery, which began with Christ's incarnation and will end with Christ's second appearing. These are the governing principles that we should hold when we read the Old Testament, especially the Prophets.

Today three things are taking place on earth: the chastisement of God over Israel, God's punishment of the nations, and the manifestation of Christ. Today we are enjoying all the conveniences invented by the Roman Empire for the manifestation of Christ. The chastisement of Israel, the punishment of the nations, and the manifestation of Christ are great matters, for they are the items of the universal history according to God's economy.

LIFE-STUDY OF AMOS

MESSAGE THREE

JEHOVAH'S CONTENDING WITH THE HOUSE OF JACOB

(2)

AND THE RESTORATION OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL WITH THE REBUILDING OF THE FALLEN TABERNACLE OF DAVID FOR THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Amos 6—9

Amos 3:1—9:10 covers Jehovah's contending, His verbal fighting, with the house of Jacob. As we saw in the previous message, in chapters three through five we have Jehovah's three reproofs to Israel. In 6:1—9:10 we have the plagues of the five signs seen by Amos, and in 9:11-15, a word concerning the restoration of the house of Israel with the rebuilding of the fallen tabernacle of David for the kingdom of Christ.

II. THE PLAGUES OF THE FIVE SIGNS SEEN BY AMOS

A. The Introduction

Amos 6:1-14 is an introduction to the plagues of the five signs.

1. Israel, Especially the High Class, Living at Ease a Life of Luxuries

In this introduction Israel, especially the high class, is described as living at ease a life of luxuries and pleasures but turning justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood, rejoicing in things of vanity, and boasting of taking horns for themselves by their own strength (vv. 1-6, 12-13). They boasted that they enjoyed everything and had

everything by their own strength and through their own capability.

2. Jehovah's Punishment

Because of this, Jehovah's punishment would be meted out through the enemy's oppression, captivity, killing, and destruction (vv. 7-11, 14).

B. The Plague of the First Sign— Locusts to Eat the Herbage of the Land

The plague of the first sign was that of the locusts eating the herbage of the land (7:1-3). The locusts symbolize the enemy's army.

1. The Prophet Praying That the Lord Jehovah Would Forgive Because Jacob Was Small and Could Not Stand

When the prophet saw that the eating of the herbage of the land was complete, he prayed, "O Lord Jehovah, forgive, I beseech You! How will Jacob stand, for he is small?" (v. 2). Some of the punishments ordained of God have not taken place because some of God's loving ones, the prophets, prayed for Israel, warning God that Israel might not endure.

2. Jehovah Repenting and Stopping the Plague

When Jehovah heard Amos's prayer, He repented and stopped the plague (v. 3).

C. The Plague of the Second Sign— Fire to Devour the Great Deep and the Land

The second plague was that of fire to devour the great deep (the deep water) and the land (v. 4).

1. The Prophet Praying That the Lord Would Stop It

The prophet prayed that the Lord would stop it, for Jacob was small and could not stand (v. 5).

2. Jehovah Repenting and Stopping the Plague

Jehovah repented and stopped the plague (v. 6).

D. The Plague of the Third Sign— a Plumb Line in the Lord's Hand

The plague of the third sign was that of a plumb line in the Lord's hand (v. 7).

1. The Lord Telling Amos That He Was Now Setting a Plumb Line in the Midst of His People Israel

The Lord was holding a plumb line to measure Israel in order to determine what part had to be destroyed and what part had to be retained. Here the Lord was like a surgeon, knowing what should be cut off and what should remain.

The Lord told Amos that He was now setting a plumb line in the midst of His people Israel (v. 8a). He said, "The high places of Isaac will be desolated, / And the sanctuaries of Israel will be made waste; / And I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with a sword" (v. 9). The "high places" were the places where Israel worshipped the idols on the mountains. The expression "sanctuaries of Israel" refers not to the sanctuary in the city of Jerusalem but mainly to the sanctuaries in Bethel, in the northern kingdom of Israel. God would make them waste; He would attack the house of Jeroboam (one of the kings of Israel) with a sword.

2. The Lord Not Passing By the People of Israel Again Anymore

The Lord said that He would not pass by the people of Israel again anymore (v. 8b).

E. The Frustration by Amaziah the Priest of Bethel

In verses 10 through 17 we see the frustration by Amaziah the priest of Bethel, a false priest. In Bethel, in the northern kingdom of Israel, they had built a kind of temple and had their own priests.

1. Amaziah's Words of Frustration

Amaziah spoke to Amos, trying to frustrate him from prophesying (vv. 10-13).

2. *Amos's Answer to Amaziah*

Amos answered, "Jehovah said to me, Go, prophesy to My people Israel" (v. 15b), and he prophesied against Amaziah and against Israel (vv. 16-17).

F. The Plague of the Fourth Sign— Summer Fruit

The plague of the fourth sign, the sign of summer fruit, is covered in chapter eight. The summer fruit signifies that the time is ripe and the end has come upon Israel. The fruit of the fig tree is ripe for someone to pick it.

1. *The Lord Not Passing By the People of Israel Again Anymore*

The Lord will not pass by the people of Israel again anymore (v. 2b).

2. *The Tragedy among Israel*

Verses 3 through 10 indicate that there will be tragedy among Israel.

3. *The Lacking of the Word of Jehovah*

Verses 11 through 13 indicate that there will be the lacking of the word of Jehovah. Our lacking of the word of Jehovah is a kind of punishment from Jehovah. For example, after Abraham took Hagar to produce Ishmael, God did not speak to him for thirteen years (Gen. 16:15—17:1). In the northern kingdom of Israel, the same thing happened. Because of their sins against the Lord, He would not speak to them.

4. *The Worshippers of the Calf of Samaria and of the Idols in Dan and Beer-sheba Falling and Not Rising Up Again*

Amos 7:14 says that the worshippers of the calf of Samaria and of the idols in Dan and Beer-sheba would fall and not rise up again.

G. The Plague of the Fifth Sign— the Lord Standing upon the Altar

The plague of the first sign was the locusts; the plague of the second, fire; the plague of the third, the plumb line; and the plague of the fourth, the summer fruit. Now the fifth sign is the Lord standing upon the altar (9:1-10), signifying that the Lord is ready to destroy Israel.

1. The Shaking and Slaying

Verses 1 through 4 speak concerning the shaking and slaying.

2. The Judging One

In verses 5 and 6 we see Jehovah as the judging One.

3. The Lord's Destruction of Israel Not an Utter Destruction of the House of Jacob

Verses 7 through 10 reveal that the Lord's destruction of Israel the sinful kingdom would not be an utter destruction of the house of Jacob. The Lord would cause them to suffer but would not allow them to be utterly consumed because He has a purpose. If there had been no Israel left on earth, how could Christ have been born of them? For the purpose of incarnation God had to preserve a remnant of Israel.

III. THE RESTORATION OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL WITH THE REBUILDING OF THE FALLEN TABERNACLE OF DAVID FOR THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

The restoration of the house of Israel with the rebuilding of the fallen tabernacle of David is covered in verses 11 through 15.

A. Raising Up the Fallen Tabernacle of David That Israel May Possess the Remnant of Edom and All the Nations Which Are Called by the Name of Jehovah

"In that day I will raise up / The fallen tabernacle of David, / And I will wall up its breaches / And raise up its ruins / And build it up as it was in the days of old; / That

they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations which are called by My name, declares Jehovah who does this" (vv. 11-12). This portion of Amos is quoted by James in Acts 15, when the apostles and the elders were gathered together to solve the problem of circumcision.

The tabernacle of David is the kingdom and the royal family of David. In ancient times it was hard to separate the royal family from the kingdom. Actually these two things are one. David's kingdom was David's royal family. That kingdom, that royal family, fell when Nebuchadnezzar came to capture the nation of Israel, devastate the land, burn the city, destroy the temple, and carry off the king. That was the fall of the kingdom of David and the royal family of David. However, in Amos God came in to promise that some day He would come back to restore the fallen kingdom of David. In that day the kingdom of David and the family of David will be restored, and all the nations will be called by the name of Jehovah.

This prophecy in Amos indicates that one day Christ will come back to be the real David. When Christ comes back, in His last appearing He will be the real David to restore His kingdom and His royal family. That will be the millennial kingdom, in which all the nations will be called by the name of Jehovah, that is, all the nations will belong to God. It was based on this that in Acts 15 James told the Jewish believers not to be bothered by Peter's and Paul's going to the Gentiles, because in the restoration all the Gentiles will belong to God, just like the Jews.

Christ will come and restore the fallen kingdom of David to set up His kingdom for the restoration of the entire universe. At that time all the nations will become God's people. This is a great item in Amos's prophecy.

B. The Plowman Overtaking the Reaper, and the Grape Treader, Him Who Sows the Seed

Amos 9:13 says that days are coming when the plowman will overtake the reaper, and the grape treader, him who sows the seed. The mountains will drip sweet wine, and all the hills will melt (cf. Joel 3:18a). This indicates that in the

restoration the produce from the earth will be abundant. There will be plenty of food for everyone.

C. Jehovah Turning the Captivity of His People

Amos 9:14 tells us that Jehovah will turn the captivity of His people Israel. They will build the desolated cities and inhabit them. Also, they will plant vineyards and drink the wine from them, and make gardens and eat the fruit from them.

D. Jehovah Planting the People of Israel upon Their Land

Amos concludes his prophecy by saying that Jehovah will plant the people of Israel upon their land, and they will not be plucked up again from their land, which He has given to them (v. 15).

