



Amos: God Who Measures

Memory Verse: Amos 5:15 & 24 “Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph...But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”

Background

Amos is the 30th book of the Bible and the 3rd book of the minor prophets in the Old Testament. *Amos* means “burden” or “burden-bearer.” The author Amos came from humble origins. He was a shepherd from the town of Tekoa twelve miles south of Jerusalem (1:1), as well as a farmer of sycamore-fig trees that produced an edible fruit affordable to the lower classes. Amos was not an educated prophet from the “school of prophets” and he was never officially anointed for prophetic ministry. Nevertheless, he left his home in Judah to answer God’s call to preach to the Northern Kingdom of Israel (7:14-15).

Amos preached to Israel “when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel” (1:1) between 760-753 BC, thirty years before the fall of Israel to the Assyrians. Amos begins by preaching judgment on Israel and the nations surrounding her (1:1-2:16), and continues with three sermons describing the sins of Israel and the reasons for the coming judgment (3:1-6:14). Throughout these sermons, Amos calls the people to “seek the Lord that they may live.” Israel, however, does not heed his warnings. Amos then describes five visions of the coming judgment upon Israel (7:1-9:10). Amos is unwavering in his efforts to describe how close God’s judgment is in order to cause the people to repent. Only the final five verses of the book offer any comfort to his listeners as he shares five promises of God for the restoration of Israel after judgment (9:11-15).

The Short Story

Amos pronounces God’s coming judgment on Israel for their vast sins and injustice towards others.

What’s the Big Idea?

Amos ministered to Israel during a time of great prosperity and success. Under Jeroboam’s leadership, Israel had enlarged their borders, business was booming, and optimism was high. Under these circumstances, the coming judgment must have seemed unlikely to the prosperous Israelites. While outwardly successful, inwardly, they were morally rotten. The Israelites were brazen, embracing their sins of idolatry, deceit, stealing, injustice, oppression of the poor, adultery, murder, and self-righteousness. While God had been faithful to His covenant and holy law, Israel had failed in all ways to live out their faith. Instead, they engaged in empty, hypocritical worship that the Lord despised (5:21). The Israelites had little genuine love for the Lord and even less for their neighbors. The book of Amos decries again and again the injustice and ill-treatment of the privileged Israelites toward the poor. They not only oppressed the poor but they also sold them for material goods, taking advantage of the weak, and using women immorally (Amos 2:6–8; 3:10; 4:1; 5:11–12; 8:4–6) with such heartlessness that even the heathen Egyptians and Philistines would be shocked (3:9-10). The Lord showed Amos a vision of a plumb line and a basket of ripe fruit (Amos 7-8). The plumb line was used as a standard of measurement and the Israelites were not measuring up to God’s standards. Instead, the city was now measured for judgment and the nation, like the basket of fruit, was ripe for God’s judgment.

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God’s purpose for the book?

We live in a world in which any number of values are available to measure our lives against: level of education, financial success, beauty, good deeds, number of facebook friends, etc...However, there is only one standard that truly matters: God’s standard. We need to live as God has called us to live according to His values and what is important to Him. When asked what the greatest commandment was, Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ” (Matthew 22:37-39). Israel had forgotten God and His values. May we live according to God’s standards, actively loving Him and others, and reflecting His glory.

**Material taken from various sources.*

Teaching Text

Amos 7:7-8 ““This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord asked me, ‘What do you see, Amos?’ ‘A plumb line,’ I replied. Then the Lord said, ‘Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer.’ ”

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

- God “showed” Amos a vision. What was the meaning of the vision? What was God saying?
- Why is it important for us to understand that God evaluates our life by His standards?
- God used a plumb line to illustrate where Israel was out of line. What has He used in your life?
- Why is it important to seek full understanding to prophetic insights and word pictures?
- Does God ever run out of grace and mercy? What about patience with us?

Practical Application

- How do you feel when you are being evaluated? What emotions come up in your heart?
- What has the Lord revealed to you that has impacted your life? What experience stands out to you?
- How do you respond to areas in your life that seem to be out of balance? How do you handle them?
- Where have you taken the longsuffering of God to its limit? What were the consequences?
- Where are you out of balance in your life? What are you going to do about it? Do you need help?

Hitting the Highpoints

- 7:15 “...the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go prophesy to my people Israel.’
- 3:1-2 “You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth.”
- 4:12 “Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel, ...prepare to meet your God.”
- 9:11 “I will restore David’s fallen shelter—I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins—and will rebuild it as it used to be.”
- 9:14 “They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards & drink their wine.”

Bonus Features

Because the Israelites treated their surrounding neighbors so poorly and used them and judged them it was only through the work of God that they were allowed to be restored. This is a great example of the work of Christ who has all authority to judge and the only One who can bring restoration to His people. We see how serious God takes the treating of others in the parable of the sheep and goats, where judgment is passed on the people because they did not treat the needs of others. God says, “What you did not do to the least of these, you did not do unto me.” (Mathew 25:45)

Personal Takeaways and Notes