

# Amos

*July 7, 2024*

## Lesson Summary

### **Main Passages**

Amos 1-2, 9

### **Session Outline**

1. Amos the Prophet (Amos 1:1-5)
2. Reasons for Wrath (Amos 2:1-6)
3. Promise of Restoration (Amos 9:1-4,11-15)

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### **Theological Theme**

God sent judgment and wrath on His people and their land in response to their idolatry and evil ways. But He followed this with a promise of hope and restoration.

### **Call to Action**

Highlight or introduce the congregation to a ministry partner to put into practice the truth of Amos 5 immediately.



## Leader Guide

# Amos

### Introduction

You can find social media videos that celebrate fun things with no problem. There are videos about gender reveals, engagement celebrations, anniversaries, birthday gifts, and pretty much anything else positive. We like to be happy, to celebrate, to enjoy, and to have fun. We don't tend to go looking for depressing or sad news.

Imagine if you heard God had a word for you then the person who came to share it told you terrible things you were about to experience. It would not be a great day. That is pretty much what occurred in the book of Amos. Through this lesson, we will learn about how far God will go to pursue those He loves and restore them to fellowship with Himself. This is ultimately good news, but a lot of difficulty took place to get there.

- ❓ What are some of your favorite happy videos to watch on social media?
- ❓ Why do you think we seek out these kinds of videos or celebrations? How might you be tempted to hide if you knew something negative was coming your way?

### Session Summary


An ordinary shepherd named Amos was given the assignment to take God's warning to his people who had fallen into sinful, idolatrous ways. Amos was not well received or welcomed as he brought words from the Lord of the coming devastation the people would soon experience. The message of this book is tough but necessary because it reminds us that all decisions carry consequences.

Whether for a Gentile nation or the chosen people of God, actions have consequences. The godless need to see who they are attacking and coming against. Those in covenant relationship with the Lord need to be held to a high standard of accountability for the truth they have been given. God does not bring punishment for the sake of punishment but with the goal of restoration. He will stay true to His character and seek to save the lost as well as pursue those who know Him so they will be restored by His great love and mercy.

## 1. Amos the Prophet (Amos 1:1-5)


This introduction to Amos tells us some things about him as a man and a prophet. He was a shepherd from Tekoa, a town outside of Jerusalem. His name means “burden” or “burden bearer” and as we see from this book, that is an appropriate description of Amos’s life and calling.

References to Amos are only found in this one book of the Bible even though he was a prophet around the same time as Isaiah during the period of divided kingdoms. Amos described himself as a sheep breeder (chap. 7), and some believe that meant he was making the point that he literally raised sheep and not that he was a shepherd in the spiritual sense of leading and caring for people.

 When have you had to share tough truth or carry a burden from the Lord? What makes this so difficult?

God chose this man who raised sheep to go and take a message to the people of Israel. Most of us desire to hear good news, so those given the task of warning people of God’s wrath or punishment are not always the most popular. We may not want to learn of dire things to come, but that was the message God sent Amos to deliver. It was a difficult task that caused Amos to become despised instead of honored.


Israel enjoyed great prosperity at this time. Things were flourishing. They had a relatively stable government, and the people enjoyed fertile land. The fact that someone would come with warnings and chastisement was not well received. Although Israel felt they were reaping the blessings from God, their ungodly behaviors conflicted with their covenant relationship with the Lord.

 Israel became ungodly in a time of great prosperity. How do we face this temptation today?

More than questionable worship practices defined their seasons of prosperity: injustice was rampant, and abuses of different kinds were common. God sent Amos to make known His disapproval and the coming consequences of their choices. A well-known verse, Amos 5:24, makes clear God’s desire for justice among His people: “But let justice flow like water, and righteousness, like an unfailing stream.” In the face of the people’s failings, in Amos 1, the prophet described the Lord as a roaring lion who would bring justice on both the people and the land. God’s desire for justice is no less today. As God’s people, we are to long for and act toward justice in the same way God does.


### God’s Desired Worship

In Amos 5:20-24, God speaks in vivid terms of His disregard for all the aspects of Israelite religion that presumably was directed toward Him. All that would please God would be an abundance of justice.

-  Application: Where is injustice rampant in our world today? How can we act on behalf of those who are victims of injustice in the world? Why is it important that we do?


## 2. Reasons for Wrath (Amos 2:1-6)

Amos proclaimed six judgments against Gentile nations as part of his message to Israel. The Lord promised judgment against Moab for their cruel sins against Edom. This is a reminder that all people will answer for their actions whether they honor the Lord or not. Moab would answer for their actions just as Israel and Judah would.

-  How is it comforting and/or challenging to know all people will be held accountable for their actions? How does this free us from seeking vengeance on our own? How does it encourage us in spreading the gospel?

Amos described the punishment Judah would receive. Because Judah continued in sin, God would bring the same consequences for His chosen nation as the six godless Gentile nations. If we aren't careful, believers will rebuke or chastise the actions of those who don't follow the Lord while turning a blind eye to our own indiscretions and infidelities. It is much easier to excuse our own sin and justify our decisions while judging others.

Judah knew what was right, good, and godly, but they chose to dishonor and disobey. God's law was a blessing given for guidance. There was a higher level of accountability for the people of the Lord because they were blessed to be in covenant relationship with God. God made it clear in this book that He is a God of justice. In keeping with His very character, no one escapes judgment, and all are accountable for their actions.

-  Where are you currently out of step with God's desire for your life? Why is it grace to have these things revealed? How do you need to respond?

God's grievance against Judah was because they had despised the His commands in various ways. When you are in close relationship with someone, rejection is a more serious offense. God would not tolerate the rejection of His people. Ultimately, this would be to bring them back to what was best for them—restoration to Him.

As we consider how this plays it in our own lives, it's important to realize God's people did not turn away from Him overnight. The people of Judah allowed small lies to slip into their thoughts, which began to affect their words and deeds. What may have seemed like a small or inconsequential compromise eventually led them to reject God in major ways. It is a slippery slope when we allow our minds to engage with the lies of the

world and begin to resist the Word of God as the ultimate standard of truth. As we see in verse six, these lies led to turning their hearts away from injustice and a lack of care for things that break the heart of God. In this world of information overload, guarding our minds from allowing lies to slip in is vital.

- Application: What are the most common places you find lies against God's Word challenging you? How can you guard against this?

### 3. Promise of Restoration (Amos 9:1-4,11-15)

A lot happens in the middle chapters of Amos. Amos called out the leaders who had given no thought or care to those around them as they neglected their relationship with the Lord, while enjoying their lives of luxury. God gave visions to Amos describing the details of destruction to come and those visions disturbed the prophet so much he begged God to relent and hold off. This happened more than once and God did relent, then the third vision came, and Amos accepted the inevitability of God's judgment on the people as the necessary way of turning the hearts of His people back to God.

- How have you seen hard times (not directly related to sin) or difficult consequences (due to sin) turn people back to the Lord?


In this final chapter of Amos, God made it clear that the Israelites couldn't hide from Him or pretend everything was fine. God held them accountable for the terrible greed, idolatry, materialism, and injustice that they had sunk into. They couldn't go anywhere to escape from what they deserved and what their actions brought on them as a people, land, and nation.

God could find them in both natural and supernatural places. This affirms the omniscience and omnipresence of the Lord, who is all powerful anywhere and everywhere. While this information was being given in the context of the upcoming punishment the people would experience, it is also a comforting reminder of who God is. God never fails in the way His people did then or the way we do now. He has promised to be with His people, and He is in control of all things, even when we do our best to resist and reject Him. He remains a covenant keeping, merciful, and loving God who never forsakes those He loves even when they prove to be unfaithful.

- How can this reminder of God's ultimate power and presence serve as both a warning and a comfort?

Despite their ongoing and devastating sins, God still loved His people and would preserve a remnant in accordance with His covenant. This people had earned complete destruction, but God would show mercy.




God's goal in disciplining His people is always restoration. Even when we suffer the consequences of our sins, as Israel did, God still loves us, and His discipline is part of that love. The Lord gave the people a vision of what they would suffer but also a vision of His promise of future hope and restoration. Just as they could count on His justice, they could also count on His mercy and love.

-  Application: What future hope do all who are in Christ have? How can this reality sustain you in difficult seasons, even ones you've brought on yourself?

## Conclusion

Despite God's faithfulness, Israel was repeatedly and decisively unfaithful. Their choices to sin and embrace ungodliness were a rejection of the law of the Lord that drew them farther away from God. The Lord confronted their sin by sending Amos to warn them of the coming punishment. Through graphic visions, the Lord stressed that His people are held accountable for their actions and sins.

Amos pled with the Lord to stay His hand and while God relented a couple of times, the third time it was evident that this punishment was going to be used by the Lord to bring restoration to His people. We can be comforted by the fact that God is true to His nature and character. He will bring judgment and allow us to reap consequences for our actions, and He will also show us mercy and love when we turn back to Him. Amos reminds us that God pursues His people to bring them back, and we can rest assured that there is no place we can go where His love will not find us. This is made most evident in the person of Christ, who paid the ultimate price for our sins so that we might be finally restored to the Father.

-  What is your biggest takeaway from the book of Amos?
-  Where have you allowed lies into your life that threaten to turn you away from God and His ways?
-  Who can you share the gospel with by sharing the account of Amos?

## Prayer of Response

*Thank the Lord for holding you accountable and showing you mercy and love no matter what you do or where you go. Ask for wisdom to see where you need to guard your mind to stay focused on the truth of His Word.*

## Memory Verse

*But let justice flow like water, and righteousness, like an unfailing stream. —Amos 5:24*

## Additional Resources

- *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, & Micah: Holman Old Testament Commentary* by Trent Butler
- *Be Amazed* by Warren Wiersbe
- *The Minor Prophets* by H.A. Ironside

## Disciples Multiplying Disciples





# Historical Context of Amos

## Purpose

Amos reminds us of the sovereignty of God in his involvement with his people. God will bring his judgment, a reality that certainly came to pass. Amos's emphasis on the day of the Lord had implications for Amos's contemporaries, but it also reminds the modern reader of a coming day referred to repeatedly in the NT—the day of Christ's return.

## Author

Amos was a shepherd from Tekoa, a village about ten miles south of Jerusalem. He received a call from God to go north and prophesy against Samaria and the kingdom of Israel around 760 BC. We do not know how long he actually was in the north; it appears to have been a fairly short time. He provoked a great deal of opposition and anger, as illustrated by his encounter with Amaziah, the priest of Bethel (7:10–17). He wrote his book, a summary of his prophecies, after his return to Judah. He probably wrote it with the aid of a scribe.

## Setting

Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah (792–740 BC) and Jeroboam II of Israel (793–753 BC). This was a time of great prosperity and military success for both nations, as all their traditional enemies were in a weakened condition. Samaria, the capital city of Israel, enjoyed enormous wealth, and luxuries flowed into the city.

At the same time, decades of struggle with Damascus had left the population exhausted. Many farmers were reduced to poverty. Their more affluent neighbors, and especially the aristocracy, swooped in with loans that the poor could not repay and then reduced the debtors to slavery and seized their lands. The leaders of society believed they had no reason to fear for the future. Their city had high walls and fortified citadels, and their army was everywhere victorious. They were the chosen people of God, and they considered themselves immune from judgment.

## Special Features

Amos is the first of the four eighth-century BC prophets, which also included Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah. Along with Hosea, Amos's ministry was to Israel even though he was from Judah. He was a layman who did not consider himself a professional prophet (7:14–15). Through words and visions, Amos spoke against the superficial religious institutions of his day.

## Extended Commentary

### Amos

Amos prophesied slightly earlier than Hosea, during the prosperous reigns of Jeroboam II in Israel (see introduction to Hosea) and Uzziah in Judah (792 to 767 b.c. with his father Amaziah, then alone until 740 b.c.). Since Amos mentions no other kings in 1:1, perhaps he prophesied only during their overlapping reigns, from 767 to 753 b.c. Amos was from Tekoa in Judah, five miles southeast of Bethlehem, but God called him to proclaim His word in Israel, the Northern Kingdom. Amos was not a professional prophet but by trade was a “shepherd” and grower of sycamore-figs, a fruit fed to livestock and eaten by the poor (1:1; 7:14). Although the term “shepherd” (noqed) is applied to the king of Moab in 2 Kings 3:4, we are not sure whether Amos was a prosperous rancher or just a hired worker (note the expression “tending the flock” in 7:15).

**Message and Purpose.** Indictment: Israel was oppressing the poor, denying them justice out of greed and self-indulgence. It was the kind of society where success owed much to knowing when to keep one’s mouth shut. It “encouraged wrongdoing and discouraged standing for principle. When grace transforms a person it brings this aspect of life into focus: a determination to create a society in which righteousness dwells” (Motyer). Israel was at the same time practicing empty religion, mixing idolatry with worship in the Lord’s name. A veneer of law and piety covered a core of injustice that the establishment seemed to accept.

**Instruction:** Israel is told to delight in and seek the Lord only and as a corollary to strive for justice, which is “reparation for the defrauded, fairness for the less fortunate, and dignity and compassion for the needy” (Finley).

**Judgment:** Failure to respond would bring destruction, death, and exile.

**Hope:** Israel should respond with gratitude to God’s election, redemption, and care of them in the past. God also promised to preserve a remnant and to reestablish the nation in the land with the messianic ruler and to bring them prosperity.

**Structure.** Amos’s book comprises three main sections plus an initial introduction (1:1–3a) and a concluding message of restoration (9:11–15). There are eight oracles against the nations in the first main section (1:3b–2:16), each beginning with “This is what the Lord says.” The first three of the five sermons in the second main section (3:1–6:14) are introduced by calls to “hear,” and the last two by expressions of “woe.” The five visions in the third main section (7:1–9:10) each begin with “This is what [the Sovereign Lord/he] showed me,” except for the last, which is a theophany (appearance of God). It begins “I saw the Lord.” The third vision is followed by a brief narrative (7:10–17) that dramatizes its message.<sup>1</sup>

## References

1. E. Ray Clendenen, “The Minor Prophets,” in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 353.