

The Role of God's People

The Book of Amos

The book of Amos perfectly illustrates God's expectations for those He is closest to, the people He has called into a relationship. Amos 3:2 states, "*I have known only you out of all the clans of the earth;*" God clarifies that with the privilege of a relationship, there is a greater expectation to conduct our lives in a manner worthy of that relationship.

Book Overview.

- The book is nine chapters that can be broken down into **four main sections**.
- Amos 1:1 indicates that Amos prophesied during the reigns of two Kings, Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel.
- When I speak of the Israelite community, I'm talking about the Jewish people who lived in two communities or land areas. Judah is commonly called the southern king, and Israel, which is called the northern kingdom.
- The book tells us that Amos mainly prophesied to the northern kingdom (Israel) even though he was from the southern kingdom (Judah).
- From chapter 7 verse 14, Amos gives his profession as a "herdsman, and he took care of sycamore figs."
- During the time of King Jeroboam II, life appeared to be going well for the people of Israel. Jeroboam II was able to expand their borders; there was apparent wealth and influence throughout the land. However, despite this picture, there are deep-seated problems that displeased God.

The **four main sections** of the book can be broken down like this:

- **In chapters 1-2**, Amos issued a series of judgment oracles against nations around the people of Israel. **In chapters 2:4-16**, God instructs Amos to pronounce judgment against Judah and Israel.
- **In chapters 3-6**, we see what is called "*the words of Amos.*" Or the prophecies against Israel.
- **In chapter 7 through chapter 9, verse 10**. There are the "*visions of Amos.*" These are five visions of judgment against Israel.
- **In Chapter 9:11-16**. The final section of the book changes dramatically. Amos speaks of salvation and hope for the restoration of Israel's land and its fortunes.

The three significant issues plagued the Israelite community:

1. **A lack of justice** – Amos speaks to how the justice system exploited the marginalized in society. **Read Amos 5:12.**
2. **Religious ritualism** – The people practiced religious ritualism instead of developing an intimate and genuine relationship with God. They fit God into their schedules yet had little time for matters on God's schedule.
3. **Greed, pride, and favoritism.** – Amos highlights in many places the mistreatment of the disadvantaged as something God despises. **Read Amos 2:6-7; 3:10; 4:1.** What does God say in the book of James from the New Testament about the sin of favoritism? **Read James 2:1-4.**

Read Amos 8:4-8. This passage serves as a concise picture of the entire book of Amos. Through His Prophet, God pronounces condemnation on His people because of their treatment of the "poor of the Land." The passage forces us to consider how God's people are expected to respond to God's words of warning, how God's people are expected to always be on the right side of justice.

Three questions to consider (*and answer*):

1. **What does this passage say about God?**
 - a. God calls out our sin. (vss. 4-6)
 - b. God always addresses sin. (vss.7-8)
2. **What is God calling His people to do?**
 - a. Listen (Amos 3:1-3)
 - b. Repent and turn to God (Amos 5:4-6; 14-15)
 - c. Recognize our sin and complacency (Amos 6:1)
3. **How can we expect God to be at work today?** Answer this question for yourself. Journal your answer; make a plan, then make changes. Finally, pray that God keeps you from falling prey to the fiery darts of the evil one.

Thought to live by:

When we see things through the eyes of Jesus, when we look into His Word, and when we are obedient to His will, we can avoid the sins exhibited by the people in the time of Amos and so rampant today. Jesus came for all people and not the favored few by this world's standard. If we are to be like Jesus, His gospel is to be lived out and modeled as He did.