

Seeing Jesus in the Minor Prophets

Amos

Historical Background

Author

- Perhaps the most interesting thing about Amos is that he isn't a prophet in the traditional sense. He didn't study with the priests. He never went to prophet school. He was just a plain ole fella. Listen to how he describes himself...
- ❖ Amos 1:1--*The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa,*
- ❖ Amos 7:14--*"I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs.*

Timeline

- Though he was a shepherd in the land of Judah, Amos's prophetic ministry was primarily to the northern kingdom of Israel from about 770-750 B.C. This means he would have arrived before Hosea, yet, their ministries might have overlapped somewhat.

Book Overview

I. Chapters 1-2:5: The announcement of judgment upon the nations

- The book of Amos begins the same way the book of Joel ended, with the roar of the Lion! Verse 2 of the first chapter says...
- ❖ Amos 1:2--*"The Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem;*
- Next we discover what the lion is roaring about. He is announcing judgment on the nations that surround Israel. Each announcement of judgement begins with the phrase...
- ❖ Amos 1:3, 1:6, 1:9, 1:13, 2:1, 2:4--*"For three transgressions of _____, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,*
- So what does this little phrase mean? To understand it, we must understand the Hebrew use of repetition. In order to describe the depth of God's holiness, they use repetition. They don't say God is MEGA HOLY! They say God is holy, holy, holy to convey the idea of his absolute holiness. Here also is this idea. The phrase "three transgressions" functions the same as saying, "they are sinful, sinful, sinful." The addition of the phrase "and of four" makes the statement even stronger. It is as if the Lord is saying..."They have sinned to the uttermost, and then they went on and sinned even more!" Thus judgement was announced upon the nations of Damascus (Syria), Gaza (Philistia), Tyre (Phoenicia), Edom, Ammon, Moab, and Judah

II. Chapters 2:6-6:14: The announcement of judgment upon Israel

- Israel would have eaten Chapter 1-2:5 up. They would have loved to hear about how God is going to judge *those wicked people*. However, they are about to find out that the lion isn't just roaring at the nations that surround Israel. He is roars at Israel as well. In fact, it makes up the majority of the book of Amos.

1. Introduction (2:6-2:16)

- In this section, we will be introduced to what Israel has done wrong, why God is so upset about it, and what God plans to do about it. A good summary of what Israel has done wrong is perhaps...

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- ❖ Amos 2:6-8--*they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals — 7 those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted; a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned; 8 they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.*
- Two major sins stand out here. First, Israel is not caring for the needy among them (2:6-7). Second, Israel is embracing paganism. There are apparently prostitutes on altars all over the place and sons and fathers alike engaging in these religious orgies. Furthermore, they continue to practice temple worship as if God doesn't know their vile deeds at the altars of other Gods.
- So what is God planning to do because of this?
 - ❖ Amos 2:13-16-- *“Behold, I will press you down in your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses down. 14 Flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not retain his strength, nor shall the mighty save his life; 15 he who handles the bow shall not stand, and he who is swift of foot shall not save himself, nor shall he who rides the horse save his life; 16 and he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day,” declares the Lord.*
 - Here God is saying, “I am going to crush you! Very few will escape and they only by the skin of their teeth

2. Detailed Announcement (3-6)



Chapter 3: I have been faithful, You have been faithless

- Here God says, I have loved you like I have loved no other yet, you forsake me. Thus, I am going to leave you destitute.
 - ❖ Amos 3:2--*“You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.*
 - ❖ Chapter 3:12--*Thus says the Lord: “As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed.*



Chapter 4: Carelessness and Complacency

- Here God blasts them for not caring for the needy among them. He describes them as those...
 - ❖ Amos 4:1--*who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,*
- Because of this he will raise up a nation against them One who will...
 - ❖ Amos 4:2--*take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks*
- Furthermore, he is furious with their worship. Though they continue certain rituals, they do so for their own glory and not the Lord's. This is the reason for the sarcasm of verse 4...
 - ❖ Amos 4:4-5--*Come to Bethel, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days; 5 offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings, publish them; for so you love to do, O people of Israel!” declares the Lord God.*
- Finally, God reminds them of all the things he has done to get their attention, to shake them from their sin and complacency. Yet they would not repent. Therefore...

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- ❖ Amos 4:12-13--*I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!* 13 *For behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth — the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name!*

Chapter 5:1-17: A call to repentance

- In the beginning of this section, the Lord laments over what he is about to do to Israel. He laments that so few will survive the destruction that he is going to bring upon them.
- ❖ Amos 5:3--*“The city that went out a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went out a hundred shall have ten left*
- Yet even now he calls his people to repentance. He calls his people to...
 - ❖ Amos 5:4--*“ Seek me and live;*
 - ❖ Amos 5:6--*Seek the Lord and live,*
 - ❖ Amos 5:14-15--*Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said. 15 Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.*

Chapter 5:18-6ff: Oracles of “Woe”

- In this last portion of God’s announcement of judgement upon Israel. He declares “Woe be unto Israel” for the following reasons...
 - (1) Woe to idolatrous Israel (5:18-27).
 - Israel is apparently eagerly anticipating the day of the Lord (v.18). This is foolish for them since for them it will be...
 - ❖ Amos 5:18-19--*It will be darkness and not light. 19 It will be like a man who flees from a lion only to have a bear confront him*
 - In verses 25-26 we find out why. In those verses God more or less says, “Didn’t we establish who gets worship (God alone) and how to worship (the sacrificial system) in the 40 year wilderness period? Yet, you have embraced foreign Gods!”
 - The consequence for this Idolatry is...
 - ❖ Amos 5:27--*I will send you into exile beyond Damascus.” Yahweh, the God of Hosts, is His name. He has spoken*
 - (2) Woe to prideful, complacent Israel (and Judah) (6:1-14)
 - Verse 1 declares woe unto those at ease in Zion (Jerusalem, the capitol of Judah) and Samaria (the capitol of Israel). Thus, God’s people falsely believe that they can live like the devil’s and be treated like saints. They are not safe says the Lord. Though they...
 - ❖ Amos 6:4--*lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall*
 - They are anything but secure. People who constantly don’t act like God’s people, aren’t really God’s people and thus God says of such people...
 - ❖ Amos 6:8--*“I abhor the pride of Jacob and hate his strongholds, and I will deliver up the city and all that is in it*
 - God’s judgement against them shall be...

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- ❖ Amos 6:14--*“For behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel,” declares the Lord, the God of hosts; “and they shall oppress you*
- For Israel, this future was very near. In 722, the Assyrians conquered them. For Judah, a littler further off. They wouldn’t be conquered and oppressed until 586 when the Babylonians crushed them and destroyed the temple.

III. Chapters 7-9: 5 Visions of Judgment

- At this point here is a dramatic shift in the book. Amos is no longer announcing the judgements of God. He is now describing visions that God has shown him. Visions of terrible judgement.
- 🕒 **Visions 1 and 2: The Locusts and Fire (7:1-6)**
 - The first two visions follow the same pattern. That pattern is...
 - (1) Amos says, “This is what the Lord God showed me” (Amos 7:1, 4)
 - (2) We see the destruction that is due Israel...A plague of locusts (7:1-3) and destruction by fire (7:4-6).
 - (3) Amos pleads with God for mercy using the phrase “O Lord God, please cease! How can Jacob stand? He is so small” (7:2, 5)
 - (4) God has mercy
- 🕒 **Visions 3 and 4: The Plumb Line and the Basket of Summer Fruit (7:7-Chapter 8)**
 - The next to visions also have similar patterns
 - (1) The Vision
 - (2) God says “what do you see?”
 - (3) Amos says...A plumb line (7:8) A basket of summer fruit (8:2)
 - (4) The vision is explained
 - **The plumb line.** A plumb line is a simple tool. It is a string with a lead weight attached to the bottom it and it is used to see if walls are in vertical alignment. If the wall is not aligned, it will not support the building and thus the wall must be torn down as it is useless. In this vision, God is telling Amos that he has measured Israel, it is badly out of alignment, therefore he will demolish Israel...
 - ❖ Amos 7:9--*the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste*
 - Their crookedness was demonstrated by Amaziah the priest of Bethel (7:10-17). Amos brought the Word of the Lord to him and he was not interested. He more or less told Amos, “Go sell you wares in Judah. They might care, but I certainly don’t!
 - **The basket of summer fruit.** The harvest of the summer fruit marks the end of the season of bounty. Likewise, the basket of summer fruit represent the end of Israel. This destruction is two-fold.
 - (1) The nation will be destroyed

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- ❖ Amos 8:3--*“The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass by them. 3 The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day,” declares the Lord God. “So many dead bodies!” “They are thrown everywhere!” “Silence!*
 - This verse teaches us that the destruction will be so awful, that the songs of the temple will become wailings and when one beholds the utter carnage, the wailings become silence

(2) The famine of the Word

- ❖ Amos 8:11-12--*I will send a famine on the land — not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. 12 They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.*



Vision 5: Destruction and restoration (Chapter 9)

- This final vision is quite different from the previous four. In this vision God does not relent as he does in the first two. There is no object lesson as in the 3rd and fourth. This final vision is Amos watching God execute the judgements that he has announced. This judgement is inescapable. In Psalm 139, the psalmist speaks of how inescapable God’s loving leading hand is...
 - ❖ Psalm 139-7-12-- *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! 9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,” 12 even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you*
- Here in Amos 9, we see Psalm 139’s wrathful twin brother...
 - ❖ Amos 9:2-4--*“If they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them; if they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down. 3 If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search them out and take them; and if they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them. 4 And if they go into captivity before their enemies, there I will command the sword, and it shall kill them; and I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good.*
- Yet God is merciful. Just as he relented in the Locust and Fire vision, he does not utterly destroy his people...
 - ❖ Amos 9:8--*Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,” declares the Lord*
- In fact, the book ends on a note restoration rather than destruction (9:11-15). God makes two massive promises in this section.
 - (2) God’s people will be restored and they will be more massive than they ever dreamed. Gone will be the days that God people are few in number and all from one nation. God will make for himself a people out of all the nations of the earth...
 - ❖ Amos 9:11-12--*11 “In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, 12 that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,” declares the Lord who does this*

- (3) God will plant his people in a glorious land for all eternity

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- ❖ Amos 9:13-15--*“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. 14 I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. 15 I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,” says the Lord your God.*

In the book of Amos, Jesus is...

1. The one who brings an end to the famine!

- Since the time of Moses, God spoke to his people through the prophets. Yet between after Malachi God remained silent for over 400 years. I imagine that many did just what was prophesied here in Amos...
 - ❖ Amos 8:12--*They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it [the Word of the Lord]*
- Jesus ended this terrible famine! No longer would God people thirst for the Word and not be satisfied. The Word of the Lord has come in the flesh! This is even better than a new prophet, it isn't just some man speaking the Words of God, it is the Word of God incarnate speaking the words of God, performing the wonders of God, and revealing the glory of God. That's what we see in John 1...
 - ❖ John 1:14--*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

2. The builder of a new nation!

- Try as they did, the nation of Israel just could not build and sustain a nation that was pleasing to God. God measured them (think plumb line vision) and found them wanting. Yet, God promises to build a new Israel. One that will be made of up people from all the nations of the earth. How will God do this? Through Jesus, the Lamb of God!
 - ❖ Revelation 5:9--*for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.*

3. The securer of eternal glory!

- Not only does Jesus build for himself a nation, But he secures infinite, eternal joy and blessing for them. Amos describes it this way...
 - ❖ Amos 9:13-15--*“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. 14 I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. 15 I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,” says the Lord your God.*
- The book of Revelation describes this same reality this way...

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- ❖ Revelation 21:3-5--*“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “ Behold, I am making all things new.*