

Amos Chapters 1 – 2:- Prophecies against the Nations

It will help your understanding if you can read through the whole book of Amos as we begin these studies. The book of Joel will follow, taking us through Ash Wednesday (17th February) and on into Lent.

Chapter 1, Verse 1:- Author, date and background Amos was a native of Tekoa, a village about 12 miles south of Jerusalem. He was a shepherd and supplemented his income by caring for and harvesting wild figs from sycamore trees. He claimed a direct revelation from God who took him “*from following the flock . . .*” (Amos 7, verse 15) and sent him to prophesy to the people of Israel – the Northern Kingdom with its capital of Samaria.

The date of his prophesy is during the 8th Century B.C., probably about 760 B.C. Uzziah, also known as Azariah, was king of Judah. He was successful in many ways but a forceful and proud character who broke God’s law by offering burnt incense in the Temple. He became a leper and lived in isolation with his son acting as regent. (2 Chronicles 26, verses 16 – 21). Jeroboam was king of Israel from 791 – 740 B.C. He deliberately encouraged the practices of fertility cults (see 2 Kings 14, verses 24 – 25). The social life of Israel at this time was characterised by adultery, robbery and murder. The luxury of the wealthy was built upon injustice and the oppression of the poor. (Amos 2, verse 6 -8 etc. and also noted in Hosea 4, verses 1-2 and 11 – 13). There is no date given for the earthquake (Amos 1, verse 1) but it was still remembered at the time of Zechariah’s writing in 520 – 518 B.C. (Zechariah 14, verse 5).

Verse 2:- sets the tone of the message of Amos. The Lord’s voice like the roar of a lion will be heard in judgement from Zion. His judgement will include Carmel (the word means “fruitful land”). This was a mountain range in the north of the country of Israel on the coast. The picture is one of a severe drought affecting both Judah and Israel.

Verses 3 – 15:- If Amos began his proclamation in Samaria with these condemnations, I can imagine his listeners cheering him on! These are a list of “war crimes” against the enemies of the people of Israel.

1 – 5:- Damascus was the capital city of the Syrian empire. This prophecy was fulfilled in 732 B.C. - see 2 Kings 16, verse 7 - 9.

6 – 8:- Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron were the chief cities of Philistia, one of the ancient enemies of Israel. Goliath was a hero of the Philistine army – 1 Samuel chapter 17.

9 – 10:- Hiram, King of Tyre was a friend of both David and Solomon. The city was condemned by Amos for handing over Hebrew prisoners to the enemy, Edom - and by Joel for selling them as slaves to the Greeks – Joel 3, verses 5 – 6.

11 – 12:- The Edomites were the descendants of Esau brother of Jacob. Teman and Bozrah were two of its important cities.

13 – 15:- The Ammonites were spared at the time of the Exodus but raided into Israelite territory on a number of occasions. The atrocity in Gilead was probably at the time of Jehoshaphat – 2 Chronicles 20.

Chapter 2, verses 1 – 3:- Both the Ammonites and the Moabites were distant relatives of Israel. Sons of Lot and his daughters Genesis 19, vs. 30 - 38. Again the judgement of the Lord is because of a war crime!

From verse 4 onwards the prophet speaks out against the sins of God’s own people! His listeners now would not be so keen at cheering him on, and by the time he started in on verse 6, were probably ready to stone him! See Amos 7, verses 10 – 15.

Verses 4 – 5:- Judah (the Southern Kingdom) was condemned because of their law-breaking. Beginning with Solomon the worship of foreign deities polluted the pure Temple worship in Jerusalem – see 1 Kings 11, 1 – 13. Judgement was delayed but inevitable - see Ezekiel chapter 7.

Verses 6 – 16:- Finally the condemnation of Israel. This is primarily because the oppression of the righteous poor. The upper classes felt untouchable, they could, and did, do what they liked. The worship in the Northern Kingdom was centred on the two sanctuaries of Bethel and Dan where Jeroboam set up two golden calves – see 1 Kings 12, verses 25 – 33. In spite of all that the Lord God had done for them they forsook His laws. Judgement was inevitable as we shall see in the following chapters of Amos

Our Lord Jesus Christ in His role as a prophet called on people to repent. If they ignored the mighty works of God then judgement was inevitable – read Matthew 11, verses 20 – 24.

If we are concerned about our standing with the Lord, read again 1 John 2, verses 1 - 2