

AMOS
Message 1

INTRODUCTION: We have before us this morning, the book of Amos. I have outlined this book as follows: First, the prophecies of Amos against the nations, chapters 1-2. Second, the preaching of Amos to Israel, 3:1-5:17. Third, the pronouncements of Amos against Israel in 5:18-6:14, and fourth, and last, the prophecies of Amos against Israel (7:1-9:15). This morning we want to look at the first two points which will take us from chapter 1 through chapter 5:17.

Amos, a name which appears nowhere else in the Bible, was an 8th century prophet, contemporary of Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah. Although he lived in Judah his message is judgment to Israel in the north. His message, verse one tells us, comes in words. Words are incredible things when you stop to think about it. They are conveyors of thoughts, and God's thoughts are conveyed, historically to Israel, and throughout history they have carried a message and they do so today, if anything, more so than ever. But in 7:14, he tells us he was not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but a herdsman and a tender of sycamore fruit. He was just an ordinary man. God chooses ordinary people from time to time. Also, he lived in Tekoa, not a prominent place, and it was some 10 miles south of Jerusalem, and so not that far from Bethlehem, with which we are more familiar.

Now verse 1 tells us his message is to Israel, the northern kingdom, and it was in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, king of Israel. He started to prophecy approximately 760 BC. Freeman says, "At the time Amos prophesied, Israel was secure from outward enemies and inwardly prosperous. She was far removed from any expectation of judgment and ruin which was to befall her about forty years thence....Prosperity had produced its inevitable fruits - pride, luxury, selfishness, greed, oppression and moral decay" (Freeman, 188).

Now he tells us that it was two years before the earthquake. Some say that this earthquake took place because Uzziah, king of Judah, went into the temple to offer incense (2 Chron. 26). By no means were Israel's political rulers to enter the ministry of the priest, and he did so. And some think this great earthquake was the result of that sin.

Amos wrote his message of judgment upon Israel at much the same time as Hosea. The conditions he addresses are the same. Feinburg says, "While Hosea emphasizes the love of God in the midst of His judgments, Amos sets forth the majesty and uncompromising righteousness of God against sinners" (39).

So, the message of Amos is not a pleasant one. The Lord roars from Zion. Feinberg says of this time, "The days of Uzziah in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel were marked by great prosperity, in fact, the most prosperous for the northern kingdom. Israel was at the height of its power under this king. The period was one of great wealth, luxury, arrogance, carnal security, oppression of the poor, moral decay, and formal worship. The moral declension and degradation of the people were appalling (Feinberg, p.40).

Now look at verse 2 (read). From this verse we gather the nature of Amos's message (read). The word 'to roar' occurs numerous times in the minor prophets. It is a fearful word. The lion roars when it is about to pounce on its prey. Now Amos lived in Judah, the southern kingdom and prophesied against Israel, the northern kingdom. Let me tell you how that kind of message goes over in the other camp. The rivalry between these two nations was like that of our own two cities, Calgary and Edmonton. Or, coming closer to home, High Level and our town of La Crete. We do not like High Level telling us what to do, nor do they like us telling them what to do. Yet, that is what is happening here in Amos. Amos, from the southern nation is prophesying against the northern nation. He said, "The pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers." The name 'Carmel', the name of a high ridge in northern Israel, means a garden land. And this garden land was about to wither. Not nice for someone from Jerusalem to tell them.

I. THE PROPHECIES OF AMOS AGAINST THE NATIONS (1-2)

So we begin with the prophecies of Amos against the nations. From chapter 1:3 - 2:16, judgment is pronounced against eight nations! We will not look at each of these, but the beginning of the Lord's address against each nation begins with the words, "Thus says the Lord..." (read verse 3). That is the source of the judgment. Then the reasons for the

judgment are given. Then follows a statement of what God will do.

So look at verse 3 again (read). The judgment against each of these nations further begins with these words. Keil & Delitsch say this, "J. Marck has correctly explained it thus: 'When this perfect number (*three*) is followed by *four*, by way of gradation, God not only declares that the measure of iniquity is full, but that it is filled to overflowing and beyond all measure'." In other words, this judgment cannot be averted in any way. Usually God relents of judgment when repentance takes place, but the time can come when it is too late even at that.

Now, at the time Amos wrote, each of these nations was in power. And then, around 30-40 years later, all these nations fell to Assyria, and Assyria was a very vicious nation! We are used to seeing borders of countries moved even in our day. If you look at the borders of early Assyria, at the time these prophecies are given, and then at its borders after the judgment upon the following nations, Assyria is enlarged by about 3 times! Now remember this country of Assyria. We will meet this country again later in the minor prophets.

In 1:3-2:16, we have the judgments of Syria, Philistia, Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah and Israel. Let me just say this about these judgments, though we could take a long time on each of these: God watches the nations and what they do and He remembers their sins and visits them in due time. This is true for every individual person and it is true for nations. It is even true for cities, as we will see later in the book of Jonah.

But let us notice that Judah and Israel, the divided kingdom of God's people is not spared either! Let us just simply read the account given in 2:4-16 (read).

II. THE PREACHING OF AMOS TO ISRAEL (3:1-5:17)

So, we have very briefly looked at the nations God judges in the prophecies of Amos. But in chapter 3,

we have three messages. Each of these messages begins like this: "Hear this word...!" Then follows the message. I want to give the main substance of each message.

A. Message # 1 (3:1-15)

1. Announcement of judgment (3:1)

In 3:1, we have first, the announcement of judgment. It is this: "Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you..." This word of condemnation is frightful. When the Lord is against you, it is frightful. Maybe there is someone among us this morning, who is living in sin, and you carry the thought that you can get away with it. But already the Lord is against you. May I encourage, repent, and God will not be against you.

Now it is clear from this verse that both Judah and Israel are addressed, since these are those whom God brought up from Egypt. But, as we go through this, we will see that the message is especially against the northern kingdom. The southern kingdom was not yet as far gone as the northern kingdom.

Now notice verse 3, "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" There are two views about this verse. One, it speaks about God and Israel, and two, it speaks of God and Amos. In the latter view, it means that God and Amos are in agreement. Amos would not be giving out these unpopular warnings if he was not in agreement with God. Don McGee, one of our recent prophecy speakers agrees with this view.

However, I take the view that it speaks of God and Israel. They can no longer walk together because they are no longer in agreement. God had not changed, Israel had.

Well, there are seven questions here, all having the negative answer, "No!" Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" Answer, "No!" There may be some of us here this morning who cannot walk

with God because we are out of touch with Him. We do not agree with Him. God says, "No, you cannot drink and smoke and carouse and walk with Me." And maybe you say, "I think I can do both." And God says, "No. We cannot walk together unless we are agreed."

The second question is, "Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?" Answer? "No!" I understand that when the lion is about to pounce on his prey he roars and scares almost to death that victim that will now surely be his. Well, Israel, here is the message: A lion has roared! It is now but a matter of time and you are dead! And listen to this word from Charles Feinberg, "In like manner, God only threatens (Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2) when He is preparing to punish." May I ask a question to parents here. Do you threaten but don't carry through? You are not only wasting your time and energy, you are training a child to disobey. And let me warn you that if you are training like this, you will pay for your child's training with heartaches. You will later say, "All this I have done for you, why do you treat us like this?"

Third, "Will a young lion cry out of his den if he has caught nothing?" The young lions do not rouse to cry out until the parent comes with prey for them. Now here is the message for Israel. You are the prey and the young lions are already crying out for you. They are hungry for you, and you are on the way to their den.

Fourth question: "Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it?" Answer: of course not. Message? The trap has already been set for you. And by the way, it is a trap and you will not see it. You will just fall into it unsuspectingly.

Fifth question: "Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all?" Of course not! Then why is the snare springing up? Message? You have set off the snare!

Sixth question: "If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid?" Let me put this into modern language: Radio announcement: "China and Russia have declared war against Canada!" Who would not be afraid? We all would be. Here is the message to Israel, "The trumpet has been blown!"

Seventh question: "If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it?" Now let me mention here, that there are two ways of translating this word translated 'calamity' by the NKJV. If you have the KJV, you will note that it translates it as 'evil'. This word can carry the idea of moral evil, or calamity or disaster. It is not a matter of question whether the Lord does moral evil or not. He does not. We all know that. The idea here, as the NKJV correctly translates, is that of calamity or disaster. You may wish to study Isaiah 45:7 as well, in light of this subject.

And the message to Israel from this? Calamity is coming, and the Lord has done it. But, let me remind you that God has warned them and warned them and warned them, and now He will allow another nation to come in and create calamity. It was not God's fault. It was Israel's fault. May I remind us that it is thus many times with us as individuals.

3. The content of judgment (3:11-15)

So, we have had the warning, and now we will have the content of this first message as delivered to Israel in 3:11-15 (read).

Now verse 12 is puzzling. What is this about the shepherd and two legs or the piece of an ear? When a shepherd guarded sheep for another, and a sheep was missing, he had to prove he had not stolen or sold it. So he had to turn in two legs or a piece of an ear. Those are the parts the wild animals such as a lion left because there was no meat on them. These are the left overs.

The message is that when God judges Israel, only that which is undesirable will be left over.

Here, I believe, is the doctrine of the Jewish remnant. There always was a believing remnant, and that which the lion would not want is this remnant. God would judge those that were guilty, but He would save a remnant. And this would be the evidence to the owner that a lion had done this.

But there will be other loss. We find it in verse 15 (read). In this verse we get a picture of how rich they were at that time. They had summer houses and winter houses. Now that would not be out of the ordinary for kings or queens, but for the average person, this spells supreme luxury. Ivory was plentiful, and there were great houses. Sound a little like a time you know? Feinberg says, "Prosperity abused and misused can only issue in utter and irreparable loss" (Feinberg, 64).

B. Message # 2 (4:1-13)

1. Announcement of judgment (4:1)

Message number 2 begins in 4:1 (read). Bashaan lies between Mt. Hermon and the mountains of Giliad, east of the Jordan. The cattle of this area were known for being well fed and of strong condition because of the lush area in which they fed.

It is argued by some that the feminine of verse 1 does not refer specifically to women but rather to the nobles of the land who had become effeminate. Somewhat like the longhaired, pony tailed, ear ring wearing, men of our day. Gill, quoting Jewish writers says, "Aben Ezra, Jarchi, and Kimchi, interpret them of the wives of the king, princes, ministers of state, and great men; and so it may be thought that Amos, a herdsman, in his rustic manner, compliments the court ladies with this epithet, for their plumpness, wantonness, and petulancy." Certainly this message would hold true for such men as well, but I think that here we have a reference to the power women carry in a well-to-do society. I think this passage is a reference to the

extravagant women of Samaria. Feinberg says, "That land is not far from the judgment of God whose women-hood is degraded" (p. 66). Surely America is there today.

Now, I would like to take a very brief moment, though it needs more time, to tell you from my brief life and what I have seen, what I believe has degraded womanhood in our day. As I see it, the two things in our time that have degraded womanhood the most are hair styles and pants. And what women do not realize when they fall for the fads and fashions of the world, is that their estimation among men as 'ladies' is automatically lowered. Men do not consciously do that. It happens automatically. When the Beatles came to America, their hair fashions were unbelievable even to the unbeliever. Today, when you look at how they looked back then, they don't look that bad at all. That should tell us what has happened to us. Paul McCartney, one of the Beatles said, "There they were in America, all getting house-trained for adulthood with their indisputable principle of life: short hair equals men; long hair equals women. Well, we got rid of that small convention for them and a few others, too." That is taken from, "Beatlemania, Girls Just Wanted to Have Fun."

In the first few chapters of David Cloud's book, "Dressing for the Lord" he gives very strong evidence for who is behind modern fashions. He writes, "The first thing we must understand is that the fashion industry is shot through and through with homosexuality." Then he writes, "Speaking at a panel discussion of Generation X Fashions in New York City in 2005, Tara Subkoff stated that fashion, 'is a gay man's profession.' That is a quote from, "A Gay Day for Fashion," New York Times, Dec. 15, 2005. Then Cloud says, "Melanie McDonagh, fashion reporter said, 'I asked a couple of fashionists friends of mine to name a single major heterosexual male designer, and they were stumped.'" He was quoting from 'Designers Parody Women at Paris Fashion Show, Daily Mail, July 20, 2004.

Many of the fashions that even our women wear were purposely designed, and that by homosexuals. If you find that hard to believe, check out any modern fashion designer. Cloud says, "Linda Grant observes that the pantsuit 'put women on an equal sartorial footing with men and 'is what fashion gave to feminism.'" That is quoted from "Feminism Was Built on the Trouser Suit" by the Guardian, June 3, 2008.

And when you go back to the nation of Israel, it is my view that when morality had sunk to an all time low, God calls the women of the northern nation, the 'cows of Bashan'.

2. Content of judgment (4:2-3)

That was Amos's announcement of judgment in message 2. Now the content of the judgment is given us in verses 2-3 (read). There was misdirected zeal in 4-5, and unheeded judgments in 6-11. This brought about a lack of food, or as pictured here by cleanness of teeth, verse 6. Yet they had not returned to God. It had brought lack of rain, verses 7-8; and yet they had not returned to God. It had caused a lack of harvest, verse 9; and still they had not repented. It had brought war, verse 10, but no repentance; and what may be an earthquake in verse 11, "Yet," God says, "you have not returned to Me."

4. Conclusion of this judgment (4:12-13)

What conclusion can God only come to with a people this stubborn in their rebellion? Verses 12-13 tell us (read).

C. Message # 3 (5:1-17)

1. Announcement of lamentation (5:1)

That brings us to the third message in 5:1-17. P.H. Kelly calls this section Israel's funeral hymn. He says, "These verses are written in a peculiar poetic form known as the 'Qinah' meter. 'Qinah' is the Hebrew word for 'dirge' or 'lamentation.' This meter follows a 3-2 pattern,

which means that the first line has three beats the second only two, the third three, the fourth only two and so on throughout the poem. The use of this meter produced a limping or halting effect which was quite appropriate for funeral marches or dirges" (p.62).

The reason for this lamentation is found in verse 2 (read). The content of this lamentation is found in verses 3-13, and it is a list of the sins of Israel. Then in verses 14-15 is God's remedy (read). And in verses 16-17, we have the conclusion of this lamentation (read).

CONCL: So, let us conclude right here in the middle of the book. God has warned the nations surrounding Israel and Judah, and Israel and Judah too, that He knows their every sin, and their sins have passed the point of no return. May I remind us this morning that that holds true for individuals as well. If we insist on living in sin, the time will come when the day of grace is over.

Then, in the first of three messages, Amos warns Israel that punishment is coming. Don McGee says that in the book of Amos, it is too late for repentance. Judgment is now only a matter of time. And that is the content of the first message. In the second message, the cows of Bashan come under scrutiny and then judgment is promised. In the third message God foretells what will happen. There will be wailing in the streets, and in the highways, they will say, "Alas, Alas." The reason? God will be passing through!

Now, our message this morning did not end on a positive note. Do you know why not? Because we are not yet at the end of the book!

