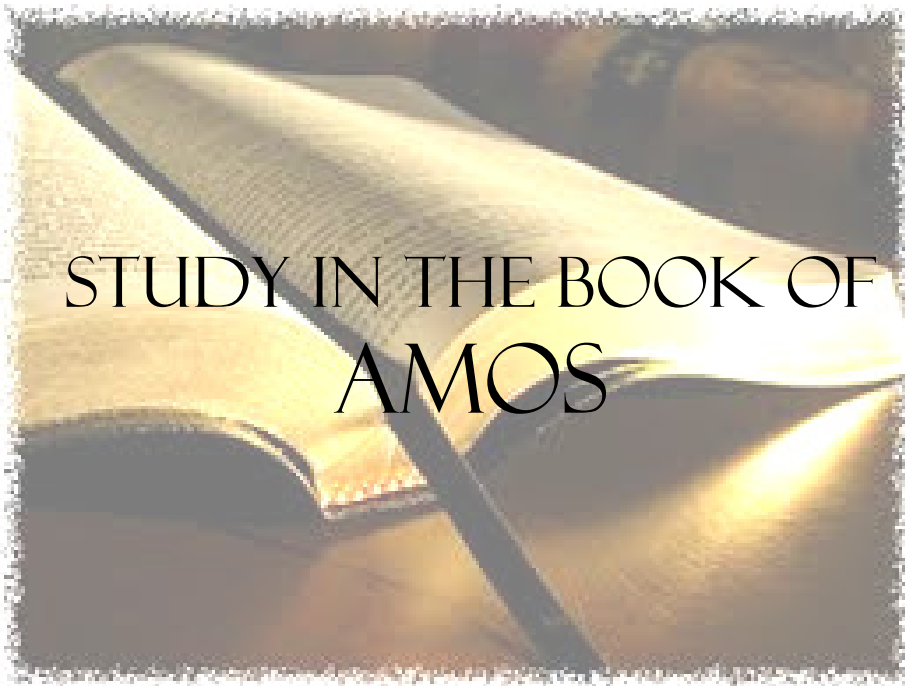


Footprints



CHRISTIAN RESOURCES



By: Bishop Warwick Cole-Edwards

Footprints into Africa

AMOS
STUDY 1

1. BACKGROUND

A. Purpose

To pronounce judgement on Israel the Northern Kingdom for their complacency, idolatry and their oppression of the poor.

B. Author

Amos (v.1) (760 – 750 BC) He served as a prophet in Israel, left his home in the Southern Kingdom of Judah to go to Israel to preach to crowds who flocked to the shrine in Bethel, he preached any sermon to those who gathered there to celebrate. His message was as unpopular then as it is now.

He preached about three things.

- i) Affluent society who were comfortable with the way of life.
- ii) He preached about justice, concern for the poor and needy.
- iii) He called Israel to have a religion that was real, a religion that changed lives and was not just a religion of words.

C. To whom written

To the Northern Kingdom of Israel and God's people everywhere.

D. Date

During the reign of Jeroboam 11 of Israel and Uzziah King of Judah in about **760 – 750 BC**

E. Setting

The wealthy people of Israel were enjoying peace and prosperity. They were complacent and oppressing the poor even selling them into slavery and soon Israel was conquered by Assyria and the rich themselves became slaves.

F. Key verse (5:11)

“But let justice roll on a river, righteousness like a never failing stream.”

G. Key people

Amos, Amaziah and Jeroboam 11.

H. Key places

Bethel and Samaria

I. Some special features

Amos uses striking metaphors from his shepherding days and his farming.
(2v13) loaded cart / (3 v.8) roaring lion / (3 v.12) Mutilated sheep /
(4 v.1) pampered cows / (8 v.1-2) basket of fruit

2. HOME TRUTHS (Chapter 1: 1-3:8)

A. Aim

In this section is to share God's concern about injustice, remember when people are oppressed God hears their cries.

B. Introduction.

- i) Amos' preaching begins with a series of Oracles against various nations and one by one Israel's immediate neighbours are brought under God's judgement for sin they had committed, it is easy to imagine the people listening and cheering.
- ii) God judges the pagan nations even though they do not know Him in a personal way as the Jews do and also he does not condemn them for their idolatry which God overlooks. (**Acts 17:30**) but for their crimes against humanity even though they do not know God they do have a conscience (**Romans 1: 18-20**)
- iii) Amos progresses to the sin of Judah (**2:4 – ff**) He condemns Israel in the same way he condemns the surrounding nations (**2:6**)
- iv) The crimes for which Israel is judged may not seem so terrible when compared to the surrounding nations (**Luke 12:47-48**)
- v) In the first four verses of **Chapter 3**, Amos tells of the way God speaks through prophets to his people

C. Notes (1:1)

Uzziah King of Judah (**790 – 740 BC**)

Jeroboam 2Kings (**793 - 753BC**)

First Oracle (v1:1-5)

Damascus capital of Syria

Gilead a territory east of the Jordan, occupied by the Jewish tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh.

Picture of cruel treatment (**842 – 795 BC**) Founder of a new line of Kings.

Second Oracle (1:6-8)

Gaza was the chief city in the conglomeration of Philistine cities

Third Oracle (1:9-10)

Tyre was the chief port in the Phoenician Empire.

Forth Oracle (1:11-12)

Edom descended from Esau, brother preferred to is probably Israel (**v.12**)

Teman and Bozrah key cities in Edom.

Fifth Oracle (1: 13-15)

Amon (Jordan) Rabbath (Amman)

Sixth Oracle (2 :1-3)

Cremation of the dead was thought to be intensely disrespectful, people believed that the person's spirit would not be laid to rest.

Seventh Oracle (2:4-5)

Amos is now speaking to Judah who had rejected God and turned to false gods.

Eighth Oracle (2: 6-11)

The Law ordered a pledge be returned the same night (**Exodus 22:26-27**)

Amorites were inhabitants from Canaan. Not allowed to drink wine

E.g. Samson and John the Baptist.

Ninth Oracle (2:12-16)

AMOS
STUDY 2

NATIONAL HEALTH WARNING
(Chapter 3:9-4:13)

AIM

Looks at the consequences of a comfortable self-centered lifestyle.

- v.9)** God calling the surrounding nations to give testimony against Israel and Judah. Only remains of Israel will remain to prove Israel once existed. Horns of the altars cut off, no mercy, only remnant will be saved.
- v.15)** A picture of a very luxurious lifestyle.
- 4: 1)** Amos compares the woman to the best cows
- v.2)** When the Assyrians conquered the people were taken away with hooks in their noses.
- v.3)** The city walls will be destroyed, no city wall is beyond destruction.
- v.5)** The Lord told them to burn their unleavened bread because the sacrifice was done in public and not in private.
- v.6-11)** These disasters were common in Palestine. Israel was as unrepentant as Pharaoh was.
- v.12-13)** These are poetical verses, from a hymn, this section is full of warnings God is hinting what is going to happen.
- 3:13-14)** Religious services are not a safe guard against God's judgement
- 4:4-5)** The priests invited the people to come and worship and they were inviting the people to sin.
- 4:1)** Highlights the role of woman, pillars of society.

AMOS
STUDY 3

(CHAPTER 5:1-17)

AIM

Take heart the need to connect our lifestyle to our relationship to God

INTRODUCTION

A funeral lament for Israel, at that time they were as good as dead in their singing of the hymn (v.8-9) balanced on either side by sections that begin and end with a lament (5:1-3, 5:16-17) offer of mercy (5:4-6, 5:14-15) A message of judgement (5:7, 5:10-13.) The lament begins with God not being a soft God, he is a merciful God and he also brings judgement with the dealings with his people. The offer of mercy reminds us that God does not require outward religion, offer of mercy for those who have a personal relationship with him, God wants us to centre our lives on him, and this will effect how we involve ourselves in society, social action will be correct. We cannot expect mercy as a right but as an act of grace. A message of judgement, a reminder to us of Israel's failure to care for the needy and to uphold justice. Justice was an integral part of Israel's lifestyle (Deut 16) This raises the question of social injustice in our country, God will not tolerate injustice.

HYMN

The hymn reminds us that God is constantly involved in creation. Natural order is continuous, everything is consistent because God is consistent. The lesson is we must not be complacent about life, on about how God acts

LAMENT

The lament is a classical style of Hebrew poetry (v.2), the description of Israel as a virgin suggests that Israel was vulnerable, life was cut short because of sin, a waste of life (v.3), picture of almost total destruction in battle (v.4-5) reference to Beersheba, Bethel, Gilgal (religious centre) because of Abraham to honour their father (v.6) Honour the Lord and live lives pleasing to God, House of Jacob (Ephraim and Manasseh) (v.7) wormwood bitterest of substances (v.8) fragment of hymn ties in with words of Chapter 3:13 (Pleades and Orion constellations of stars) (v.10) court cases took place at the city gate, the system was corrupt (v.11) the verse suggests that the poor had to pay heavy taxes on their land and crops (v.13) this implies that there was intimidation, anybody who valued their well being would have kept quiet about injustice, (v.16) farmers are too busy for public mourning, a catastrophe so great that even the farmers will come and mourn (v.17) reminds us of the Passover in Egypt, but this time the angel would not bypass the Israelites

HYMN

God has sovereign right over all his creation.

AMOS
STUDY 4

UNDER THE CLOUDS
(Chapter 5:18-6:14)

AIM

To face up to God's judgement upon our worship and our society (**5:21-27**)

INTRODUCTION

We notice this passage presents a series of woes against Israel.

NOTES

Woe the day of the Lord (**2nd coming**)

They thought the day of the Lord would be a feast.

Amos attacks their religious practices, they were doing injustice to their fellowman and injustice to God.

Chapter 6 Luxurious lifestyle of the ruling elite, while others were living in poverty

5:18) Day of the Lord refers to the second coming, end times a constant theme even in Old Testament times, Israelites thought they would be exalted.

5:21-24) Repetition of the words 'your' and 'you' these words emphasize the way God disowns their worship.

v.22) Lists of types of offering, whatever they bring God is not interested

v.25) The sense of this verse is not that the Israelites did not offer sacrifices in those 40 years but they should have been obedience to God

v.27) Therefore I will send you into exile, a hint that the Assyrians would be the conquering nation.

6:1) Here Amos introduces the Southern Kingdom. Mount Zion, Jerusalem linked with Samaria, capital of the Northern Kingdom, both God's people.

v.4) Here he speaks to the elite.

v.10) Amos seems to be saying the punishment would be so great, no one must mention the name of the Lord.

v.13) Lo Debar and Karnaim both conquered by Jeroboam 2 (**2 Kings 14:25**)
Amos says it is pointless in boasting in minor victories, when judgement is coming.

AMOS
STUDY 5

SERVICE CHARGES

(Chapter 7:1-7)

AIM

To learn the cost of serving God in prayer and in facing opposition.

INTRODUCTION

In these verses we see three pictures.

1. Locusts
2. Fire
3. Plumb line.

These verses portray the judgement of Israel. In the first two things Amos intercedes and God relents, but the third time God does not relent God is firm in judgement.

PRAYER OF AMOS

1. When we pray it does make a difference, God allows our prayers to affect the action He takes.
2. Our prayers must be in the will of God. In the two cases Amos's prayer was effective and within God's will. The third time Amos knew God's patience had run out.

NOTES

- v.1) Traditionally two crops a year, first crop was taken by taxes, the second crop locusts ate and the people starved.
- v.2) Amos prayed and asked the Lord to forgive. Amos is devastated and feels for the people, even though they boast, Amos uses the plea by saying they are so small.
- v.4) In this picture of a holocaust, not even the sea can put out the raging fire.
- v.6-8) Why God was punishing the people, because they had turned from the Law Amos does not intercede.
- v.9) High place - place of Canaanite worship, corrupt worship of God, they often linked these places to famous people and made them a "holy place"
- v.10) Bethel, Israel's alternative to Jerusalem, place of worship. The priesthood was politically appointed and he would have been paid by royal courts.
- v.12) Amaziah said to Amos go back to Judah, Amaziah assumes Amos is an appointed priest.
- v.13) Do not prophesy anymore at Bethel, because it is the king's sanctuary, not allowed to speak against the king.
- v.14) Your wife will become a prostitute, children will die by the sword. Amaziah deserved a personal word from God. Taken by the Assyrians.

AMOS
STUDY 6

TIME IS UP
(Chapter 8)

AIM

To face up to the consequences of sin and injustice.

INTRODUCTION

Time is up for Israel. Judgement day. Judgement in the world of commerce, dramatic details of what is to follow in future in terms of an earthquake, eclipse and famine. The relationship between sin and suffering. Does God send suffering as a punishment for specific wrong doing as Amos suggests? Amos' accusations against the merchants for the way they look at the Sabbath, the Sabbath got in the way of their work.

Roy Clemence: "I can think of no simpler test of some ones spirituality than the degree to which he gives God his attention, some of us never enter into satisfying depths of worship because we are too busy, our minds are fluttering on a thousand things we are going to do business trips, money to be made, job to be found We cannot put our minds off them all, the time when we are in church we are mulling them over."

NOTES

- v.2) A pun on the Hebrew words basket of fruit.
- v.3) Contrast between noisy thanksgiving at harvest time, silence after what God had done
- v.5) Normally all trading ceased during all religious festivals.
- v.6) Selling the needy for a pair of sandals, land deals sandals were swapped
Ruth 4:7
- v.8) Every year the Nile rises up and floods the whole valley, the river often carries rich silt and it fertilizes the crops, running of the water down the river used to describe an earthquake.
- v.10) Mourning
- v.11) Always during times of great distress, they always turned to a prophet for a word, but there was no prophet they could turn to. (**2 Kings 2:4**)
- v.13) Even the young will suffer.
- v.14) Reference to false gods and cult practices.

AMOS
STUDY 7

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

(Chapter 9)

AIM

To delight in the hope that God gives beyond judgement.

INTRODUCTION

Chapter divided - judgement and restoration of God's Spirit.

- v.1-10.)** = Characterise judgement, spells out a clear message - conveyed in poetical terms. Judgement chapter of Israel will not escape. May try to plead God's rescuing love i.e. (Egypt) yet no privilege is shown.
- v.10-15)** = Tone changes. Destruction will not be total. Restoration and hope for the future. Amos is therefore a book of hope.
God therefore is not only a God of judgement, he is also a loving God who will ultimately establish his good purposes for the world.

NOTES

- v.1-6)** A picture of judgement that occurs in other places in the Bible (**Is.34, Joel 2:1-11, 2Peter 3:1-13, Rev. 6:12-17**)
- v.1)** God pictured as if he were initiating destruction from the place where worshippers expect blessings (altar)
- v.2)** "sheol" grave, place of the dead.
- v.3)** Carmel – highest mountain in region, view of the valley of Armageddon. Serpent (**Ps 74:14**) sea beast feared by the Jews.
- v.7)** Ethiopians who lived on the South Nile were people who Jews thought did not matter to God. Israel did not consider them, yet God recognizes them and loves them as well. (Cushites)
Philistines - Israel's enemies, yet they meant a great deal to God.
- v.8)** Promise that some will escape God's punishment.
- v.9)** Pebble - represents sinful leaders of Israel who will not escape judgement.
- v.11-15)** Suggested that these were added later - not agreed. It is suggested that it does not flow, yet we can find a God of love in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.
- v.11)** House of David refers to David's dynasty. There is a hint of the Messiah.
- v.12)** Edom - Often symbol of rebellion against God.
Picture - of an end of all opposition to God and the beginning of the reign of peace.
- v.13)** Land is so productive that the ploughman will catch up with the reaper (i.e. desert into an oasis today)