

Title:                   **AMOS**  
                                  *A Prophet in Overalls*

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Introduction:

750 years before our Lord's incarnation the nation of Israel was a rich, thriving, prosperous kingdom. During the reign of Jeroboam II, the nation was peaceful, stable, strong, and very, very religious (Amos 3:12, 15; 4:1, 4; 5:5, 21-23; 6:4-6; 8:3:10). Many enjoyed such wealth that they had winter houses and summer houses. Others were even more wealthy, living in ivory houses on great estates.

But all was not well in Israel. The nation was morally degenerate. The land was filled with greed and corruption. The poor and weak were mercilessly oppressed by the rich and powerful (2:6; 5:11). Immorality was rampant (2:7). Rebellion, disdain of and contempt for authority was widespread (5:11-12). Religion flourished. Religious ceremonies and activities were faithfully observed (5:21), and observed in the name of Jehovah. But the land was altogether given over to idolatry. Bethel, the house of God, had become Bethel, the house of transgression (4:4).

Into this great, proud, prosperous, religious, secure society, the Lord God almighty dropped a bombshell by the name of Amos, a prophet wearing overalls (1:1-2).

Amos was a farmer, a herdsman, one who took care of sheep, and cattle, and fig trees. He was what folks today would disdainfully call “a redneck,” “hayseed,” “a country bumpkin.” Amos was a farm-boy, a farm boy from Tekoa, which was just a few miles south of Jerusalem, in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

(Amos 1:1-2) "The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. {2} And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither."

The Lord sent this poor, uneducated, farm boy, bibbed overalls and all, up North with his Word. Amos came storming into Samaria with a message of divine judgment, a message of impending wrath upon a people who had abandoned God and his worship, crying, “*Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!*” He spoke of drought, famine, pestilence and earthquakes. Judgment had already begun; but it had no effect upon the hearts of the people. It would therefore increase and continue to increase, until the nation was altogether destroyed. The Lord God swore by his prophet that because they repented not when he sent famine to their bodies, he would send a far worse, far more destructive famine, a famine of spiritual food (8:11-12). — “*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in*

*the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.”*

Amos’ name means, “Burden-bearer,” and he bore in his soul “*the burden of the Word of the Lord,*” to a people who could not have cared less.

### **DIVINE JUDGMENT**

The Book of Amos declares that God almighty “*will by no means clear the guilty.*” He must and shall punish sin. Because he is righteous, his rule over all the earth is righteous and just. Sin cannot be tolerated by him. It must be punished.

- When people sin as social group, as a nation, the nation is punished accordingly (Pro. 14:34).

(Prov 14:34) "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people."

- When individuals sin, they are punished accordingly as individuals (2 Cor. 5:10-11).

(2 Cor 5:10-11) "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. {11} Knowing therefore the

terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."

## **JUDGMENT UPON THE NATIONS**

Amos began his message to Israel in a strange way. In chapters 1 and 2 Amos describes the judgments the Lord would bring upon the nations around Israel. These were the Gentiles among whom the children of Israel lived.

If you look at a map of the area you will see that Amos goes around the whole nation of Israel, declaring the judgment of God upon those nations because of their transgressions.

He begins with **Damascus** (1:3-5) way up in the northeast section of the map above Israel. He tells Israel that Damascus must be judged because of its cruelty.

Then he speaks of **Gaza** (the ancient land of Philistia) (1:6-8), in the opposite direction, way down on the southwest side of Israel. He tells Israel that God will destroy Gaza because they had enslaved Edom and because they were idolaters.

Then, in verses 9-10, he moves back up the coast to the land of **Tyre**, on the northwest side of Israel, and here he points out how God had judged this country because the people had broken their covenants and treated their fellow men not as brethren but as enemies.

Next (1:11-12) he moves on down to the far south of Israel to the land of Edom, the ancient country of Esau, declares that God's judgment fell upon that nation because of their implacable hatred of Israel.

Then, in verses 13-15, Amos moves back up the east side of Israel to the land of Ammon. (Jordan, is the name by which we call it today. Its capital, Amman, was the capital of ancient Ammon.) They were punished because of their barbaric cruelty, greed, and lust for power.

Moab, on the southwest side of Israel, was to be judged because of its hatred of Israel (2:1-3).

Then, he mentions the Southern nation of Judah (2:4-5), and declares that Judah must be judged because it had despised God's law.

At the end of chapter 2 (vv. 6-16), he speaks to Israel, the Northern Kingdom and that will judge them for their corruption and for injustice, corruption and injustice greater than any of the other nations. The Lord God was pressed under them, as an over-loaded cart is pressed with its load (2:13).

As we read Amos' message it is obvious that the people of Israel was totally undisturbed, absolutely complacent, as long as he was talking about the other nations. They seem to have been thinking, "Well, they got what was

coming to them." But when the prophet zeroed in on them, they were enraged. They said, "Why don't you go away and preach somewhere else? We don't want to hear what you have to say."

### **CHAPTER 3**

From verse 1 of chapter 3, Amos deals with these people exclusively, driving his message home to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He begins by pointing out to them that they were a people who had a special, privileged position before God.

(Amos 3:1-2) "Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, {2} You only have I known of all the families of the earth."

That is exactly what they wanted to hear. You can picture them swelling with pride and arrogance. "We are God's elect, his chosen, favored, special people. We have a great history and a great heritage. Then, he hits them right between the eyes with a sledge hammer.-  
*"Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."*

### **PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY**

You see, that which was their great pride was the very reason for their great judgment. Light despised brings great wrath. Privilege creates responsibility. And the

greater our privileges, the greater our responsibilities. The nation of Israel had been given the greatest revelation, the greatest privileges of any nation. But they turned from them to walk in utter darkness and idolatry. Israel was the very house of God. But they had turned the house of God into a house of iniquity.

- They had the gospel revealed to them — The Passover — The Feasts — The Sacrifices — Priesthood — The Temple — The Altar — The Mercy-Seat.
- But they willfully rejected God's revelation.
- Therefore, they were sentenced to the outpouring of God's wrath." *Judgment must begin at the house of God.*"

This is exactly what Peter means when he says, "*judgment must begin at the house of God*" (1 Pet. 4:17). It always begins there. God always starts with his professed people, and then he moves out to those round about them. They walked with God. They talked with God. But they despised him and his Word. For this reason, the prophet says, God is going to send judgment (3:3-8).

(Amos 3:3-8) "Can two walk together, except they be agreed? {4} Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? {5} Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall *one* take up a snare

from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? {6} Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done *it*? {7} Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. {8} The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

### **THE GOLDEN CALVES**

Do you remember the two golden calves that were erected by the first King Jeroboam in the cities of Bethel and Dan (1 Ki. 12:28)? Israel was sent to worship there and the people called those calves Jehovah. And they worshiped and bowed down before those golden images. Those two calves represented three basic evils in Israel, for which God was set in judgment against them, evils for which the judgment of God is manifest today.

Those golden calves, in that they were made of gold, represented the hunger of this people for material gain, the love of wealth, materialism — the god of gold. And because they were calves, or young bullocks, they were representative of power — the god of superiority. They were also symbolic of pagan fertility gods of the nations round about them who worshiped the bull as a sign of fertility or sexual potency. So those golden calves represented Israel's enslavement to their own sensual lusts. The calves symbolized material greed, shameless pride, and sensuality. One might conclude (and

rightfully so) that the Holy Spirit intended Amos' prophecy for our own generation.

For these things the nation of Assyria was being raised up by God to come sweeping down from the north to carry Israel away into captivity. This word of coming wrath was given almost two hundred years before that took place. God gave Israel space to repent. But they refused. That is the message of...

#### CHAPTER 4.

The lesson here is very clear. — Judgment never produces repentance. Time after time, the Lord sent judgment that should have awakened the people (4:6-11); but they were only hardened by it.

(Amos 4:6-11) "And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. {7} And also I have withholden the rain from you, when *there were* yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. {8} So two *or* three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. {9} I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured *them*: yet have ye

not returned unto me, saith the LORD. {10} I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. {11} I have overthrown *some* of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."

### CALL TO REPENTANCE

Yet, God ever remembers mercy, even in the midst of providential wrath and judgment. So Amos delivers a message of mercy. As God's ambassador, he calls Israel to repentance. He calls for them to turn from their idols to God. The sinner's only hope is reconciliation to God (5:4-8).

(Amos 5:4-8) "For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, **Seek ye me, and ye shall live**: {5} But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought. {6} **Seek the LORD, and ye shall live**; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour *it*, and *there be* none to quench *it* in Bethel. {7} Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth, {8} *Seek him* that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day

dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name:"

## A REFUGE OF LIES

But Israel continued to harden their hearts, taking refuge in their refuge of lies (5:18; 6:1). There were among them, just as there are today, two groups, who took refuge in two ways, hiding from God: the self-righteous and the presumptuous.

**The self-righteous** are described in chapter 5, verse 18. — *“Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.”* These self-righteous religionists went about crying, "Oh, isn't this a terrible day. I remember the good days, when people were better, more thoughtful, more spiritual, and more devoted. But things are different now. Times are so hard. Things are so bad." They were wringing their hands, appeared to be mourning, and going through all kinds of rituals and religious ceremonies and saying, "Oh, there is no hope for anything. Oh, if the Lord would only come! Oh, would that the day of the Lord would come. Would that we could go home to be in heaven." Do you ever hear people talk like that that? Then the prophet thunders, *“Woe to you that desire the day of the Lord.”* He says, "Don't you know what that day will be like? Do you have any idea what you are saying? That day will be a day of darkness and doom for you (5:18-27).

God sees through us. He sees through our religion and our rituals. He sees our hearts. He demands truth in the inward parts, in the center of life, in the core of our being, not mere outward conformity to religious codes. God sees through all the sham and pretense without the slightest difficulty. He is not impressed with the “*bodily exercise*” of religion. He requires “*godliness.*” — “*Thou desirest truth in the inward part*” (Ps. 51:6).

In chapter 6, verse 1, Amos exposes **the presumptuous**, the carnally secure. — “*Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria.*” These people cried, “We are not concerned about these things. Let's eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. Let's have as good a time as we can and make the most of life; let's enjoy it to the full while we can.” And the prophet says, “*Woe to those who are at ease in Zion.*”

The ease spoken of by God's prophet Amos is a carnal ease, a fleshly security. It is not the confidence of a person who is pardoned, but the ease of a hardened wretch who has learned to despise the death chamber. It is not the assurance of one who is on the rock, but the ease of a senseless drunk, whose house is crumbling in an earthquake, falling from its sandy foundations, but he is in such a stupor that he does not know and does not care what is happening. As C. H. Spurgeon put it...

“This is not the calm of a soul at peace with God, but the ease of a madman, who, because

he has hidden his sin from his own eyes, thinks he has concealed it from God. It is the ease and peace of one who has grown callous, hardened, brutalized, stupid, sullen, and careless, who has begun a sleep which God grant may soon be broken, or else it will surely bring him where he shall make his bed in hell.”

### A PROPHET INDEED

In chapter 7 Amos shows himself to be a true prophet. His heart was for the people to whom he spoke. Even as he pronounced God’s wrath and judgment upon the people, knowing that they fully deserved it, he interceded with God on their behalf (vv. 2-6), as Moses before him (Ex. 32:30-32) and Paul after him (Rom. 9:1-3). Then, when he was accused by Amaziah of being a false prophet, he acknowledged that he had no credentials or credibility as a prophet, except the call and commission of God (vv. 10-17). — *“The LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophecy unto my people Israel.”*

### FIVE VISIONS

In chapters 7-9 Amos describes five visions the Lord gave him concerning Israel. **The first was of a plague of locusts** coming to devour the land. When he saw the terrible destruction this would bring asked the Lord to

forgive his people and withhold the plague; and the Lord granted his petition (7:1-3).

**The second vision was of a devouring fire.** Again, Amos sought God's mercy to spare Israel; and the Lord again repented for this and spared the people (7:4-6).

**In the third vision Amos saw the Lord standing beside a wall holding a plumbline in his hand.** This was a symbol of the judgment of Israel by God's righteous law. The Lord told him plainly that he was determined to execute judgment, that Israel would not be spared.— *“I will not again pass by them any more.”* Amos humbly bows to God's revelation, and makes no intercession (7:7-9).

It is at this time that Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent a false report to the king concerning the of Amos, accusing him of conspiracy against the nation. With the king's authority behind him, Amaziah ordered Amos to leave the country. In response to Amaziah Amos stated that he had not chosen to be a prophet but God had called him to the work, that he had no choice but to deliver the message God had given him. The chapter ends with a bold prophecy of divine judgment against Amaziah and his family because of his obstinate opposition, and a reaffirmation of judgment upon Israel (7:10-17).

**In the fourth vision (chapter 8) the Lord showed Amos a basket of summer fruit.** The nation was

described as overripe and ready for judgment. — “*The end is come upon my people.*” It is in connection with this vision that Amos speaks of the worst of all judgments God can send among a people this side of hell (8:11-12). When God shuts heaven and refuses to send his Word to a people, they have no hope.

**The fifth vision** (9:1-10) **Amos “saw the LORD standing upon the altar,” not in mercy but in wrath to destroy the nation.** Nothing would stop him.

### **MERCY PROMISED**

Immediately following this last vision, as in the other prophets, the final scene declares the ultimate salvation of God’s elect (9:11-15). Read verses 11-12. — “*In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.*”

These verses are quoted by James (Acts 15:15-17) as referring to the fact that God’s building again the tabernacle of David was not to be a reversion to Judaism, but rather the gathering of his elect from among the Gentiles by the preaching of the gospel. What a declaration of God’s saving grace Amos gives at the close of his prophecy! He declares that the Lord God will raise up the fallen, that he will raise up the ruins of

his people, raise up that which we have ruined, that he will deliver his captives, that he will save his elect remnant, and that he will do all his wondrous works of grace for such undeserving sinners as we are because of his covenant promises, symbolized in the promises made to Israel of possessing the land of Canaan.