

Amos
Fall 2008 Adult Bible Classes, Sunday Morning

prepared by Bob Young

Introduction

What are the living messages of the OT prophets?

Background of text, social setting, and prophet provides parallels in our day

Points of interest

Amos was a herdsman of an ugly type of sheep with fine wool (noked).

He lived in Tekoa, 12 miles south of Jerusalem and 6 miles south of Bethlehem.

God sent him to prophesy in Bethel (7:10).

Historical setting

Amos dates his activity during the reigns of Uzziah (Azariah, 2 K 15:1ff), king of Judah 783-742 B.C., and Jeroboam II, king of Israel 786-746 B.C.

The Five Visions of Amos

Locusts (7:1-3). A threat of God's punishment, but God relented.

Devouring fire (7:4-6). Destruction forecast, but God relents at the prophet's pleading.

Plumb line (7:7-9). Announcement of judgment and doom for house of Jeroboam. The prophet does not plead further.

Basket of summer fruit (8:1-2). Text contains a pun: summer (qayits) and end (qets) conveys that the end is at hand.

Altar scene (9:1). The Lord standing by the altar commands to smite the capital cities and let none escape.

Structure of the Book

Three elements are common in prophetic books: oracles against nations, oracles against God's people (Israel), oracles of hope. Amos reflects this structure.

*1 Chapters 1-2. Formulaic oracles against neighboring nations.

*2A Chapter 3-6. "Hear this word" introduces denunciation of sins and reminder of God's past dealings with his people. Note the rhetorical questions. Note also the lament or funeral song of Israel (5:1-2).

*2B Chapter 7-9. "The Lord showed me" and "I saw" contain the visions with denunciation of sins.

*3 Oracles of hope, 9:11-15.

Key Concepts

Sins of Israel: lack of compassion for poor, bribery, dishonesty, immorality, lack of respect for word of God, materialism, apathy (2:6-7; 5:7,11; 5:12; 8:5,6; 2:12, 5:10)

Day of the Lord (5:18).

False confidence. God chose and delivered Israel (2:10); Israel claims to worship but does not (4:4,5; 5:21, 23-24); Israel is now only like one of the nations (9:7), but any special relationship would demand punishment (3:2).

Contemporary lessons

Do we commit the same sins as Israel?

Are we falsely confident?

Questions

The restored tent of David becomes NT basis for justifying Gentile mission (Acts 15, cf. Amos 9:11-12). What do you think of this use of the prophecy by James?

Is there ever a time when people are “beyond hope”?

What are some of your favorite (or best known) passages from Amos?

What do you hear Amos saying about the connection between privilege and responsibility?

When do we in the church become like the people whom Amos was condemning?

Is the God of Amos a God of justice or mercy? (You have to pick one as more accurate than the other.)

Were any of the teachings of Amos unique or new in his day? Which ones?

Which of the teachings of Amos are most applicable to the church today?

Which of the teachings of Amos are most applicable to society today?