

and no man will have time to change his mind or get ready (Matthew 25:1–13).

The saved ones from all nations and languages will gather in the New Jerusalem for the great feast (Revelations 5:9). Jesus Christ will reign over His Kingdom as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelations 17:14).

A RESTORED ISRAEL?

Down through history, many Jews looked for Israel to be restored. They believed God would bring back the glory of Solomon's reign. They believed Israel's borders would be made larger and her barns would again be full.

The disciples made this mistake also. They asked Jesus, 'Will you restore the kingdom of Israel at this time' (Acts 1:6)? But Jesus turned their minds away from the thought of a physical kingdom for Israel. He pointed them to the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would bring God's Kingdom to their own hearts.

Jesus said He would dwell in them. He would leave them and return to Heaven. The Holy Spirit would take His place (Luke 24:49). They would not be left orphans. They would have the Spirit of God to "guide them into all truth" (John 16:13) and to make them bold in their witness. The Holy Spirit would be with the Christian Church until Christ came again (Matthew 24:30).

TALK ABOUT:

1. Did God promise to bring back a remnant of people from captivity (9:14–15)?
2. Why did the apostle James quote from Amos chapter 9 (Acts 15:17)?
3. Who came to restore David's fallen tent (Acts 15:16)?
4. The gospel message continues to restore what man.....when Adam sinned (Romans 3:23)?
5. What kingdom blessing did Jesus promise His disciples (Luke 24:48)?

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Bible Study Books

AMOS



Fred Morris

In easy English

To the Reader: The Book of Amos may seem difficult to understand. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you read God's word. God's prophets spoke "the word of the Lord" (1:1). God's words, whenever spoken, are the authority and foundation of our faith. Keep your Bible open and find the references. Bible verses are quoted from the New International Version of the Bible. Use the "Talk About" questions to test your knowledge of the section. Invite others to join you and study God's word together. They will be blessed. This study follows the lead of commentator Matthew Henry (1662–1714).

THE BOOK OF AMOS

Amos was a prophet-farmer from Tekoa, a small town about six miles south of Bethlehem in the tribe of Judah (2 Chronicles 11:6). His work was to tend the groves of fig and sycamore trees and care for flocks of sheep. He may have been a tenant farmer who served a landlord.

Amos called himself "one of the shepherds of Tekoa" (1:1; 7:12–15).

God began to speak through His prophet Amos during king Uzziah's reign in Judah (792–740 BC). Jeroboam II (793 – 753 BC), was king in the northern kingdom of Israel.

By this time in Israel's history, most of the land that had been lost to Syria had been recovered (2 Kings 14:25). There was peace on Israel's border with Judah where there had been years of fighting. This time of peace led to a flow of trade which made the merchants in Israel very prosperous.

A MISSIONARY TO ISRAEL

Amos did not prophesy in his own town, or even to his own tribe of Judah. He travelled to Israel, the northern kingdom, and spoke God's words to the king and the people there. He prophesied that **a)** Jerusalem, Judah's capital city, would be destroyed (2:5). **b)** Foreign armies would invade Israel (3:11). **c)** God would bless the people if they repented (5:5–6). **d)** God would judge the whole world because of its sin (chapters 5–9).

In Israel times were good! Trade and commerce filled the towns with an abundance of goods. The people were rich and could afford to live in luxury. The land flowed with milk and honey as God had promised (Exodus 3:8). And people did not want to hear about God's judgments which would come upon them because of their careless lives and false religion.

Clever politicians lived in royal chambers. Kings were proud and cruel. Intrigue and murder ruled from their palaces (2 Kings 14:5). War and plunder kept their armies busy (2 Kings 14:7, 15).

The Bible records the names of good and bad kings who ruled over Judah and Israel. The kings of Israel and Judah "did evil in the eyes of the Lord" (1 Kings 14:9). They led the people to worship idols of wood and stone.

God's prophets risked their lives to rebuke these wicked kings. They

own people, and there would be no place to hide. The Lord decreed, "I will fix My eyes upon them for evil and not for good" (9:4, 8).

Exile in foreign lands would not be the end. God would always keep safe a remnant (a small number) of men and women who were faithful and full of eagerness to follow Him. When blessings or judgments came on Israel, in hard times and in good times, a godly remnant stood faithful to Yahweh. All the prophets spoke of this godly remnant. About 100 years later a remnant did return to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple (Ezra 2:1). This remnant is a picture of the Christian Church.

The prophet saw the time when God would show special favour to the Gentile nations, "all the nations that bear My name" (9:12). They would be brought into God's Kingdom and bear the name of Jesus Christ.

Paul and Barnabas told of the signs and wonders God did among the Gentiles in the days of the early Christian Church (Acts 15:9–12). So James could quote Amos' prophecy to the leaders in Jerusalem, He said to them, "The words of the prophets are in agreement with this..." Jesus came and raised up the 'tent' of David "that the remnant of men might seek the Lord..."

In the Gospel Church, God was "rebuilding David's fallen tent." The house of Israel was not complete without Gentiles. God was bringing "all the Gentiles that bear My name" into David's family.

ALL SCRIPTURE POINTS TO JESUS CHRIST

All Old Testament Scripture pointed to Jesus, the Suffering Servant, who would set up His Kingdom. He would come to earth in the time of Daniel's fourth empire, the Roman Empire (Daniel 2:44). So Jesus came and preached the "good news of the Kingdom" (Mark 1:15). This happened when the Roman Empire ruled Judea (Luke 2:1).

Jesus Christ came when Israel's witness was at its lowest. He restored God's witness, through His apostles and the Christian Church. It was "the Lord, who does these things..." not Paul or James or Peter.

Jesus did not say His Kingdom would be an earthly kingdom, or that it would last one thousand years. He said to Pilate, "My Kingdom is not of this world. If it were, My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews" (John 18:36).

Jesus told His disciples, "The Kingdom of God is within you..." (Luke 17:21). He is the King who rules in men's hearts.

Jesus did not speak of His physical, bodily return to the Mount of Olives. The Bible says that this world is only temporary and will pass away (2 Peter 3:10–13). The world to come is eternal. It can only be eternal because it is spiritual. Men and women need to repent now and enter God's Kingdom.

Jesus did not speak of any other chance to repent after this life is over, or after He comes again for His people. He told us, over and over again, to watch and be ready for His coming (Matthew 24:42).

Christ's second coming will be as sudden and as blinding as the lightning,

Amaziah shouted at Amos, "Get out, you seer! (1 Samuel 9:9). Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there."

Amos turned from Amaziah and prophesied again him and his family. He also said his property would be divided up and given to others (7:17).

A BASKET OF RIPE FRUIT

Read: Amos 8:1-14

Amos saw in a vision a basket of ripe figs.

God asked His prophet, "What do you see, Amos?"

He answered, "A basket of ripe fruit."

Then the Lord said to him, "The time is ripe for My people Israel; I will spare them no longer" (8:2). The basket of ripe figs confirmed God's warnings.

God was tired of the way Israel "trampled the needy of the land" (8:4).

These leaders were so busy taking care of themselves that they 'trampled' or harmed their needy brothers. They cheated and swindled. They gave short measure, fixed the scales so people did not get the right weight, and put up the price! They even tried to sell the dirt and husks from the threshing floors along with the grain! (8:4).

When man refuses to listen to God, God stops speaking. The Holy Spirit is silenced in our midst. That happened to Israel. They were carried away to Assyria where they were without scroll or priest.

When we seek the Lord and walk in the light of His word, we will know a continual unfolding of His will for us. When we know His will, it must become 'law' in our lives (Psalm 119:105). If we do not obey, the light will fade from our path and the voice of His Spirit will grow faint.



TALK ABOUT

1. In his visions, Amos saw the people.....and King Jeroboam taken captive.
2. What message did Amaziah send to the king (7:10)? Was this true?

ISRAEL WILL BE DESTROYED

Read: Amos 9:1-15

In his vision, Amos saw the Lord ready to destroy the heathen altar of Jeroboam. He saw the temple of Baal falling on the heads of the leaders as the armies of Assyria destroyed it (9:1).

The Sovereign Lord would use a heathen nation to bring judgment on His

spoke "in the name of the Lord God". Their messages warned kings and common people that God would bring judgment on them for their wicked ways.

Judah, in the south, was no better in obeying the Lord than Israel. God's warning was for them also. God's message is for all time and for all men. It is universal. Physical and political boundaries mean nothing to God.

God gave Amos one message. It was a message of judgment for men and women who had turned away from God to worship idols.

The prophet Isaiah said, "Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made" (Isaiah 2:8).

Amos preached God's message against Israel's idolatry many times and in many places. He preached the same message again and again because "God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 6:5; Hosea 4:17).

At this time, the words of God's prophets began to be put into writing. In this way God's words were preserved and went with Israel down through the centuries. Now they have come to us. Let us take heed (1 Corinthians 10:11).

TALK ABOUT

1. Where did Amos live?
2. What work did Amos do?
3. How did the people of Israel live at that time?
4. What danger did Amos face when he told wicked kings about God's judgments?
5. Why did God send Amos to Israel to speak for Him?
6. Why did God give us the record of Amos?

THE SHEPHERD FROM TEKOA

Read: Amos 1:1-2

Two years before the earthquake, God gave His prophet 'words' to speak to the people of Israel. Amos said, "The Lord roars from Zion..." (1:2) There were lions in Palestine and Amos thought of the king of beasts, the lion. He spoke strange words. Prophets often used picture words to make their message plain for the common people.

The earthquake is noted by Zechariah (14:5). Josephus (a Jewish historian) said it was severe. Some Jewish Rabbis said this happened when King Uzziah was removed from the temple by angry



priests because God had struck the King with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:16).

The names 'Zion' and 'Jerusalem' have the same meaning (1:2). Zion is the place of God's throne and authority in heaven and a picture of His people on earth. The prophet Isaiah also spoke of God's chosen people as "the glory of Zion" (Isaiah 60:19–22).

Israel (and Judah) was God's special people (Deuteronomy 7:7–8), but the prophet's words looked beyond them to the Christian Church.

Amos told the people that God was angry because of their sins. God's voice roared out from the place of His dwelling. "Suddenly the lush pastures of Mount Carmel withered and dried, and all the shepherds mourned" (1:2 TLB).

God's words of rebuke wither the soul. Either our hearts become hard and dry like the drought-stricken land, or we us cry out for God's mercy.

God had spoken to Israel through drought and famine! Now He would speak to them through His prophet Amos.

TALK ABOUT

1. What animal did the prophet think of when he thought of God's majesty and power?
2. 'Zion' is sometimes used by the prophets to mean God's throne in?
3. Why did God's voice roar from Jerusalem?
4. Why did the green grass dry up and die?
5. Does God speak to us today through drought and famine?
6. Why does God test His people?

JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL'S NEIGHBOURS

Read: Amos 1:3 – 2:3

Israel in the north and Judah in the south had enemies on all sides. Their enemies were cruel and more powerful than they.

Amos named these enemy nations:

- a) Aram (Damascus) to the north (1:3–5).
- b) The Philistines and their cities, Gaza, Ashdod and Ekron, to the west (1:6–8).
- c) Tyre as the capital of Phoenicia on the Mediterranean Sea (1:10).
- d) Edom and its cities Teman and Bozrah (1:11–12).
- e) Ammon and its capital city Rabbah (1:13–15; Deuteronomy 3:11).
- f) Moab and the fortresses of Kerioth (Ker'-i-oth, 2:1–3).

All these nations were wicked. They had worshipped Molech an idol-god to which they sacrificed their baby 'kings,' burning their bones in the fire (2:1). They were guilty of trading in slaves and genocide.

Edom's sins were singled out because "they did not keep a treaty of brotherhood" (1:9). The 'covenant' or treaty may have been that made between Solomon and Hiram at the time the temple was being built (1 Kings 5:12; 9:13).

you into exile beyond Damascus, says the Lord..." (5:27; 6:7). Many years before, Moses prophesied: "The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away...like an eagle swooping down...a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young" (Deuteronomy 28:49–50). That fierce-looking nation was Assyria. Assyria carried the Israelites away as prisoners.

WOE TO THOSE WHO SIT AT EASE

Read: Amos 6:1–14

Important men in Israel lived in luxury. Their careless lives were spent in feasting, lounging, and drinking, but they were not happy. God made us for a purpose. We need to find and pursue it.

Amos asked these leaders, "Are the heathen cities around you better off than you are?" Then the prophet spoke of "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion..." (6:1 KJV). He said their feasting and lives of luxury would soon come to an end (6:7–8).

Ever since Adam was put out of the garden in Eden, men have searched for that happy and blessed place called paradise. Satan wants men and women to think that wealth and ease bring happiness. They do not. Paul told Timothy, "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6).

TALK ABOUT

1. Why did these proud Israelites think God was blessing them?
2. Does abundance of things mean that God is blessing us?
3. What was the judgment that Amos prophesied (5:27; 6:7)?
4. God said He would destroy the heathen altars at Bethel ___ True ___ False (3:14)?

LOCUSTS, FIRE AND A MEASURING LINE

Read: Amos 7:1–9

God gave Amos visions of the coming destruction of Israel. In his visions he saw what would happen when the enemy attacked them:

- a) Swarms of locusts eating up all their crops (7:1).
- b) All the people hungry for there would be no food in the city.
- c) The Lord measuring the city wall.
- d) "King Jeroboam (Jer-o-bo'-am) will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile..." (7:11).

When Amos told the wicked priest Am-a-zi'-ah at Bethel about his visions, the priest was furious. He would not allow such words to be spoken against the King.

Amaziah sent a message to King Jeroboam: "Amos is raising a conspiracy (or plot) against you in the very heart of Israel" (7:10).

TALK ABOUT

1. What happens when we do not keep in step with God's Spirit (Galatians 6:8)?
2. Can you name some of the countries that were enemies of Israel?
3. What was a Nazirite (Numbers 6:2)?
4. How did a Nazirite have to live?
5. How are Christians called to live today (1 Peter 1:15–16)?

A CALL FOR MEN TO REPENT

☛ Read: Amos 5:1–27

Amos grieved for Israel. He said, “Fallen is virgin Israel...deserted in her own land, with no one to lift her up” (5:2).

Amos told the people, “Do not seek Bethel...do not go to Gilgal...or journey to Beersheba...” (5:4). At these places people worshipped idols.

God Almighty, who made the stars, the sun and “the waters of the sea” was able to bring judgment on any nation that casts righteousness to the ground (5:7). “God will bring the fortified city to ruin” (5:9).

At the same time, Amos called for them to repent. He cried out, “Seek good, not evil, that you may live...” (5:14). Moses pleaded with their forefathers to seek the Lord and live (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19–20).

God said, “You trample on the poor...You build yourself stone mansions, but you will not live in them” (5:11). “Woe to you who long for this ‘Day of the Lord...’ ” Amos said, “That day will be darkness (for you) and not light” (5:18).



TALK ABOUT

1. Why do Christians long for this “Day of the Lord” (5:18,20)?
2. All Israel hoped for a new day when the nation’s fortunes would be restored by an act of God. Did Amos say this would happen?

GOD HATED THEIR RELIGION

God hated and despised their religious feasts. He hated the noise of their songs (5:21–23). God hates empty worship. Jesus said that no one can worship God and idols (or mammon) at the same time (Matthew 6:24). God demands that His people have “no other gods...” (Exodus 20:3).

God’s justice flows “like a never-ending stream” (5:24). He demands that His people be like Him – righteous and just in their dealings with one another (5:14–15). We are commanded to “hate evil and love good...” (5:15).

Amos spoke of judgment that was near at hand: “Therefore I will send

God promised to destroy all Israel’s enemies with the ‘fire’ of His judgment and He did. God brought these wicked nations down to the dust; in many cases He used other nations to do this.

ISRAEL REJECTED GOD’S LAW

☛ Read: Amos 2:4 – 16

Amos said God’s own people would not be spared. They had no regard for keeping God’s laws (2:4). Israel trusted in their fortresses and strongholds and the wealth they had stored in them.

The people of Israel were “led astray by false gods” – they were greedy, careless, drunken and immoral (2:7–9).

Amos reminded them of all that God had done for them. They were chosen and special. God thought of them as His sons and daughters (11:1). When they were slaves in Egypt God brought them out (3:1). He cared for them in the land and drove out their enemies. God gave them prophets and Nazirites to instruct them.

Nazirites took special vows. They lived lives totally separated to God (Numbers 6:1–3). But the leaders of Israel mocked the Nazirite laws. They tried to make those who took vows drink wine (2:10–12). When God’s prophets spoke against their wickedness, they rejected God’s warnings and “rejected the law of the Lord” (2:4).

Amos had spoken some terrifying words (2:11–16), so the King and people had told the prophet not to speak to them again (7:12).

ISRAEL AND JUDAH

☛ Read: Amos 3:1 – 15

Amos spoke against the whole nation. God brought the nation out of Egypt (3:1). God sent Amos to remind them of who they were, “chosen out of all the families of the earth” (3:2).

God not only chose the nation to have a special place in His heart, He also delivered them from being slaves in Egypt. He set them free to worship Him only and made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. There He told them, “If you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all the nations you will be My treasured possession. Although the whole earth is Mine, you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5–6).

Amos asked, “Do two walk together unless they have agreed...” (3:3). Walking is a picture of our fellowship with God. If we do not agree with God’s requirements and have a deep desire to please Him, we cannot walk with Him (Philippians 2:5).

God told Abraham, "Walk before Me and be blameless" (Genesis 17:1). Not a perfect Abraham, but a man who obeyed God's commands and lived out God's purpose for his life! Because Abraham had faith in God's promise, God declared him "righteous" (Genesis 15:6).

Abraham had a special relationship with God. He walked with God and talked with Him as a man and a wife walk and talk together. God chose Israel as His 'bride.' He wanted to walk with His people in a close relationship of love and trust. But Israel had turned away from her Lover. Now she worshipped gods of wood and stone which were no gods at all.

God chose to 'know' Israel as a partner in a special covenant, to care for her and watch over her. But His love is not forced upon us. He waits for us to agree and fall into step with Him (Galatians 5:25).

GOD WARNED ISRAEL

Amos said, "Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

God sent prophets to warn Israel that they would suffer for their sin of rejecting God's love and care. Amos warned that the nation would be taken captive to Assyria (3:11; 5:27). The rich and powerful nations around Israel – Philistia (Ashdod) and Egypt – are called to witness God's justice in judging His people (3:9).

Israel tried to be like the rich and famous. They "hoarded plunder and loot in the fortresses" and believed they were secure (3:10, 15). God said He would tear down their winter palaces and destroy their mansions.

Today, our homes may be our fortresses! In them we store our gold and silver, our beautiful furniture and our family treasures. We secure them with locks and guards.

Do we set our hearts on these treasures? Jesus said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal..." (Matthew 6:19).

We stand as 'prophets' in our towns and tell our neighbours that God's ways are righteous and just. We tell men and women that His judgment against sin is certain, but do we live like people who believe this?

TALK ABOUT

1. What advantages did Israel have?
2. What had God done for them?
3. Did all the people of Israel worship idols (Isaiah 11:11)?
4. Why would God want to walk and t.....with His people? Do you 'walk' with Him?

THE WOMEN OF SAMARIA

Read: Amos 4:1–13

"Hear....you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy..." Amos said. God saw the women of Samaria and what they did made Him angry.

They had built their mansions and filled them with fine things. They drank and lounged and called to their husbands, "Bring us some drinks!" They bragged to each other about their "offerings and sacrifices" (4:5). But they cared nothing for the needy.

God heard the cry of the poor and vowed justice for them. Those who lived in luxury would be given "empty stomachs." The Assyrians would lead them away "through breaks in the wall" of the city. This punishment was "because you have not returned to Me, declares the Lord" (4:6, 9, 11). Instead of worshipping at the temple, the people worshipped at the calf shrines of Bethel and Gilgal. The people worked hard at being religious. Their worship was full of show and ritual, but it was not true worship. It had nothing to do with the worship of Almighty God.

Amos listed five disasters that came on Israel – drought and famine, blight and mildew, locusts – yet they did not return to the Lord God.



GOD PROMISED TO SPARE A REMNANT

God promised to save a remnant of godly people who did not bow their knees and heads to idols (5:3; 1 Kings 19:18).

Though God chose a nation only a few had true faith. Though he worked with Israel tirelessly, only a small number worshipped and obeyed His commands.

Israel had not received the Lord God with open arms. Even when the Messiah Christ came into the world, the vast majority rejected Him. John said, "He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). They did not believe God and they perished in their sins.

"As a shepherd saves from the lion's mouth..." so will (a remnant) of the Israelites be saved. They would be the faithful few who stood against the evil of their day (3:12).

King Jeroboam (782–741 BC) drove back the Assyrian invaders and took back all the land that belonged to Israel under King Solomon. This was "in accordance with the word of the Lord, spoken through His servant Jonah...the prophet from Gath Hopher" (2 Kings 14:25).

God gave His prophets faith and wisdom. We, too, can know His plan for us (Colossians 1:9). This wisdom and faith also help us to understand His plan for this world. God's promises support us as we play our part in carrying out His plan for us (Ephesians 4:11–13; 1:22–23).