

Background

Wealth is a relative thing. The average middle class American enjoys comforts that only kings and emperors enjoyed in the ancient world. Most twenty-first century American Christians live in peace and prosperity, enjoying the fruits of their labor as the blessing of God. Certainly such achievements should not be belittled or envied—through personal responsibility in an innovative, free market society, the path to prosperity is a relatively open road. Yet in many parts of the world, the path to wealth is still paved by corruption. When considering the global population, Jesus’s words concerning the poor still ring true. The poor are always with us, often on a massive and overwhelming scale. Poverty may come as a result of laziness and foolish behavior, but it too often as a result of violence, corruption, social injustice, and crimes against humanity. Amos preached in an environment of unparalleled prosperity for the upper class of Israel, though the vast majority of people still lived in poverty and oppression. The political expansion of Jeroboam II ensured a false sense of geopolitical security (see 2 Kgs 14:23–29); the Assyrian Empire was temporarily subdued by its own internal strife, and Israel had little to fear from other external threats. The ruling class had come to see their blessings as a sign of God’s favor, yet they were blind to the suffering of the population they suppressed. Moreover, they were blind to the coming wrath of God. What seemed nearly impossible during the reign of Jeroboam II—the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel—was actually only decades away.

Al Fuhr, *The Message of the Twelve* (pp. 111-112)

The Man

- Amos was not a “professional” prophet
 - He was shepherd and Sycamore fig-tree keeper (1:1; 7:14)
- He lived in Tekoa (small town 12 miles south of Jerusalem)
- He was a simple, working-class Southern man sent to prophesy to the upper-class elites of the Northern kingdom of Israel.
- Amos means “burden,” and his call to deliver this message was indeed a difficult burden that drew rejection, ridicule, disgust, threats, and condescension. But Amos, probably more than any other prophet, delivered his message with blunt, pointed, boldness. He was fearless and did not shy away from his purpose:

Amos 7:10-17

10 Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent a message to Jeroboam, king of Israel: “Amos is hatching a plot against you right here on your very doorstep! What he is saying is intolerable. 11 He is saying, ‘Jeroboam will soon be killed, and the people of Israel will be sent away into exile.’” 12 Then Amaziah sent orders to Amos: “Get out of here, you prophet! Go on back to the land of Judah, and earn your living by prophesying there! 13 Don’t bother us with your prophecies here in Bethel. This is the king’s sanctuary and the national place of worship!” 14 But Amos replied, “I’m not a professional prophet, and I was never trained to be one. I’m just a shepherd, and I take care of sycamore-fig trees. 15 But the Lord called me away from my flock and told me, ‘Go and prophesy to my people in Israel.’ 16 Now then, listen to this message from the Lord: “You say, ‘Don’t prophesy against Israel. Stop preaching against my people.’ 17 But this is what the Lord says: ‘Your wife will become a prostitute in this city, and your sons and daughters will be killed. Your land will be divided up, and you yourself will die in a foreign land. And the people of Israel will certainly become captives in exile, far from their homeland.’”

Structure & Outline

- **Oracles of God's Judgment on the Nations (1:1-4:5)**
(The Trap is Set for Israel)
 - **Judgment on the Enemies of Israel (1:1-2:3)**
 - ***"The LORD roars from Zion..."*(1:2)**
 - **Damascus** – for brutality and cruelty in war (1:3-5)
 - **Gaza** – for slave trafficking (1:6-8)
 - **Tyre** – for betrayal of a treaty of brotherhood (1:9-10)
 - **Edom** – for intense hatred of Israel (1:11-12)
 - **Ammon** – for cruelty against women and unborn children (1:13-15)
 - **Moab** – for vengeance, cruelty, and desecration (2:1-3)
 - **Judgment on Judah - Southern Kingdom (2:4-5)**
 - For Apostasy and Rejecting God's Law
 - **Judgment on Israel Northern Kingdom (2:6-16)**
 - **The Main Focus of Amos' Prophecy**
 - Gross, Greedy Oppression of the Poor and Helpless
 - Idolatry & Religious Apostasy
 - Materialist Arrogance
- **The Guilt & Sentencing of Israel (3:1-6:14)**
 - **Condemnation for Israel's Crimes (3:1-4:5)**
 - **Unheeded Chastisements & Ignored Discipline (4:6-13)**
 - **Overthrow and Destruction of the Ten Tribes of Israel (5:1-6:14)**
 - **Woe of the Terrors of the Day of Jehovah (5:18-27)**
 - **Woe Upon the Wicked Leaders (6:1-14)**
- **Five Prophetic Visions (7:1-9:10)**
 - **The Vision of the Locusts (7:1-3)**
 - **The Vision of the Devouring Fire (7:4-6)**
 - **The Vision of the Plumb Line (7:7-9)**
 - **The Vision of the Basket of Ripe Summer Fruit (8:1-14)**
 - **The Vision of the Destroyed Sanctuary (9:1-10)**
- **A Promise of Future Messianic Hope (9:11-15)**



Message & Application

1. Israel Was Chosen of God, Especially Blessed, and Called to a Purpose Among the Nations. This Makes Her Crime Greater, and Her Judgment More Sure.

Amos 3:1-2

Listen to this message that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel—against the entire family I rescued from Egypt: “From among all the families on the earth, I have been intimate with you alone. That is why I must punish you for all your sins.”

Israel’s Purpose Was to Witness to the Goodness and Faithfulness of God to the World

- Genesis 12:2,3

And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; **And so you shall be a blessing . . . And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.**

Exodus 19:5-6

You shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; **and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**

Isaiah 42:6-7

“I am the Lord, I have called You in righteousness,
I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,
And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the nations,
7 To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the dungeon
And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.

- Instead, Israel Not Only Failed, but Excelled in Gross Evil and Selfishness

1 Peter 4:17-18

For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God’s household. And if judgment begins with us, what terrible fate awaits those who have never obeyed God’s Good News? ¹⁸ And also, “If the righteous are barely saved, what will happen to godless sinners?”

- That Purpose and Mantle Flows Now from the Messiah to His Church
(Also See Isaiah 40-55)

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God’s* own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

2. God's Condemnation of Social Injustice

Crimes Against Humanity (Their Own People)

- Greedily Treating the Poor Like Chattel

(2:6-7) I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they sell the righteous for money And the needy for a pair of sandals. "These who pant after the *very* dust of the earth on the head of the helpless...

- Strictly Forbidden by God's Law

Leviticus 25:39-43

³⁹ "If one of your fellow Israelites falls into poverty and is forced to sell himself to you, do not treat him as a slave. ⁴⁰ Treat him instead as a hired worker or as a temporary resident who lives with you, and he will serve you only until the Year of Jubilee. ⁴¹ At that time he and his children will no longer be obligated to you, and they will return to their clans and go back to the land originally allotted to their ancestors. ⁴² The people of Israel are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt, so they must never be sold as slaves. ⁴³ Show your fear of God by not treating them harshly.

(Also see Amos 2:8 & Exodus 22:26-27)

- Taking Sexual Advantage of the Helpless (2:7)
- Compassionless, Gross Inequities Between Rich and Poor

(4:1-3) Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, "Bring now, that we may drink!" ² The Lord God has sworn by His holiness, "Behold, the days are coming upon you when they will take you away with meat hooks, And the last of you with fish hooks.³ "You will go out *through* breaches *in the walls*, Each one straight before her, And you will be cast to Harmon," declares the Lord.

3. The Illusion of the Security of Wealth

(6:1, 4, 6-8)

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, And to those who *feel* secure in the mountain of Samaria... Those who recline on beds of ivory And sprawl on their couches, And eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall,... they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. ⁷ Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, And the sprawlers' banqueting will pass away. ⁸ The Lord God has sworn by Himself, the Lord God of hosts has declared: "I loathe the arrogance of Jacob, And detest his citadels; Therefore I will deliver up *the city* and all it contains."

4. God's Contempt for Arrogant, Vain Religion

(5:21-24)

What sorrow awaits you who say,

“If only the day of the Lord were here!”

You have no idea what you are wishing for.

That day will bring darkness, not light.

¹⁹In that day you will be like a man who runs from a lion—
only to meet a bear.

Escaping from the bear, he leans his hand against a wall in his house—
and he's bitten by a snake.

²⁰Yes, the day of the Lord will be dark and hopeless,
without a ray of joy or hope.

“I hate, I reject your festivals,

Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies.

²²“Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings,
I will not accept *them*;

And I will not *even* look at the peace offerings of your fatlings.

²³“Take away from Me the noise of your songs;
I will not even listen to the sound of your harps.

²⁴“But let justice roll down like waters
And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

- A Famine of God's Word & Presence

(8:11-12)

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “When I will send a famine on the land,
Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the Lord.

¹²“People will stagger from sea to sea And from the north even to the east; They will go to and fro to seek
the word of the Lord, But they will not find *it*.”

5. Messianic Hope in the Midst of Imminent and Intense Judgment

(9:4,8, 11-15)

“And I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good.”

“Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, And I will destroy it from the face of the
earth; Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,”

“**In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David**, And wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins
And rebuild it as in the days of old; ¹²That they may possess the remnant of Edom **And all the nations who
are called by My name**,” Declares the Lord who does this. ¹³“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord,
“When the plowman will overtake the reaper And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; When
the mountains will drip sweet wine And all the hills will be dissolved.

¹⁴“Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live *in
them*; They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, And make gardens and eat their fruit.

¹⁵ "I will also plant them on their land, And they will not again be rooted out from their land Which I have given them," Says the Lord your God.