

# Seven Bible Studies 2017

## Prophecy

### September 15: Amos 1-4 (John Morris)

Reading for September 15, 2017

Amos 1-4

#### THE MAN

Amos was from Tekoa (1:1), a community six miles south of Bethlehem, the ruins of which still bear the name Takua, today. Before his prophetic call, Amos was a sheepbreeder (1:1; 7:14) and a “tender of sycamore fruit” (a type of fig) (7:14). Unlike many prophets, he did not have a prophetic ancestry (7:14; comp. 1 Sam. 10:10-12) which may explain why he doesn’t mention his father’s name in the preface to his prophecy (unlike Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Jonah, and Zechariah).

#### HIS TIME

Amos prophesied “in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel” (1:1), making him a contemporary of Hosea, Isaiah, and possibly Jonah. During this period, the people of Israel had grown prosperous and presumptuous, in love with lavish living (Amos 6:1, 4-6) and little concerned with God’s claim on their lives. Amos speaks often of the people’s fine homes: their “palaces” (3:10, 11; 6:8), “houses of ivory” (3:15), “houses of hewn stone” (5:11), the “winter house” and the “summer house” (3:15). The people had become absorbed with creating a little piece of Paradise here on Earth, as in Haggai’s day (Hag. 1:2-4). A sense of physical security and spiritual apathy prevailed. Very much like our own time.

#### THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book of Amos can be broken up in a number of ways, but the following works for me:

- (1) Amos’ preaching in Israel (chaps. 1-6)
- (2) Amos’ probable preaching in Judah (chap. 8-9)
- (3) The link between the two, comprising three visions (7:1-8) and the narrative of Amos’ expulsion from the northern kingdom (7:9-17)

#### COMMENTS ON CHAPTERS 1-4

From 1:3-2:3, we read pronouncements of God’s judgment on six surrounding Gentile nations. Each pronouncement follows a five-part pattern:

- (1) “Thus says the LORD”
- (2) “For three transgressions of \_\_\_\_\_, and for four” (a literary device, comp. Prov. 6:16; 30:15ff)
- (3) “I will not turn away its punishment”
- (4) “Because....”
- (5) “I will send/kindle a fire...devours its/the palaces”

After pronouncing judgment on these Gentiles nations, God then turns His attention to Judah and Israel, following the same five-part pattern with Judah, but omitting the fifth point with Israel (2:4-8)—the chapters that follow will serve as an extended substitute.

In chapter three, God assures that the punishment He has promised through the prophets will come to pass. “God is not a man, that He should lie” (Num. 23:19). He speaks of the coming

Assyrians in vs. 11 as “an adversary”, describing three things that will transpire when they come to conquer. They will (1) “be all around the land” (2) “sap your strength from you” and (3) “your palaces shall be plundered.” He says they will even destroy the “altars of Bethel” (vs. 14) —that is, the altars set up in the headquarters of the nation’s idolatrous religion (7:13). Neither they, nor their gods, will escape. All this was fulfilled in 722 BC when Samaria, the capital city, was taken.

In chapter four, God reminds the nation of all the measures He had already taken to bring them to repentance: famine (vs. 6); drought (vss. 7-8); destruction of crops (vs. 9); death through plague and military loss (vs. 10); near decimation (vs. 11). All of these had been Divine attempts to spur a change of heart, but none had worked. After each one, God has to say, “Yet you have not returned to Me” (vss. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11). Hardness of heart was their undoing.

### **Comment:**

Butch O’Neal:  
Thank you, John!

### **Comment:**

Charles Fry:  
Good content, John.

A side note on the book and its timing, regarding the earthquake mentioned to fix the date for the prophecies of Amos mentioned in the introduction (1:1-3), it is very likely that was intended as corroboration of Amos’s message when the book was written. While the captivity of the land is in view several years away, Amos alluded several times to the rising and falling of the land (8:8, 9:5 for example), breaking down of walls, houses, palaces, temples etc (6:11, 9:1, 7:9, 9:9) and by way of contrast promises the rebuilding of David’s fallen tent/walls/ruins in 9:11. Amos alluded to the shaking God would unleash, two years before it happened, affirming his legitimacy as a prophet. The Israeli archaeologist, Yigael Yadin, in excavations at Hazor (1956) found evidence of significant earthquake damage which he dated to about 760 BC, the time frame of Amos.

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright:  
Always a fave, Amos!

### **Replies:**

Kevin Crittenden:  
So was Andy.

## **September 22: Amos 5-9 (Wade Stanley)**

Something is amiss in Amos! A few highlights from my reading.

5:18-19: There were those who yearned for God’s judgment upon the heathen. Such an infatuation betrays the deeply-deceived mentality of a nation mired in iniquity. Never do they consider whether God’s judgment might fall upon them.

5:21-23: The hypocrisy of Israel makes her attempts to worship God empty. He is utterly disgusted.

5:24-27: The disloyalty of Israel stretches back to their earliest days.

6:3-7: The powerful are described as indolent, opulent, and dissolute. An Epicurean spirit has prevailed. They are indifferent to the moral decline to which they contribute and ignore the warnings of impending wrath.

7:1-9: God shows Amos a series of visions. Amos intercedes for Israel in the first two and God relents. The third will come to pass.

8:11-12: A forecast of the time when divine inspiration would stop. The intertestamental period fits this well.

9:11-15: The book ends with a glimmer of hope, the coming kingdom of the Messiah.

**Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:  
Thank you, Wade!

**Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:  
Great summary on these chapters, Wade; thanks! Hate evil, love good!