

NAME

The word “Amos” means “burden.” The contents of the book represent the burden which Amos felt upon his heart.

AUTHOR

Mitchell:

Amos is known as an “unlettered prophet” because by his own testimony (7:14-16) that he was a farmer and fruit picker. Otherwise, we know little of his personal history. He came from a small village called Tekoa which is located about 12 miles south of Jerusalem. He was a member of the southern kingdom whom God sent to the northern kingdom, Israel. This made his task especially difficult because there was no love lost between Judah and Israel.

DATE

This prophecy seems to have been delivered on a visit to Bethel (7:10-14), about 30 years before the fall of Israel (722 B.C.) which places this prophecy about 760 to 750 B.C. Or, according to Josephus, the earthquake (1:1) occurred at the time when Uzziah was struck by leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:16-21); this would place Amos’ prophecy about 750 B.C. Amos prophesied sometime during the years that Jeroboam II (793-753) was ruling in Israel and Uzziah (792-740) was ruling in Judah. He was contemporary of Hosea (750-715) in the north, and Isaiah (740-681) and Micah (740-700) in the south. Hosea may have been in Bethel at the time of Amos’ visit.

Mitchell:

Israel was at the peak of her prosperity (765-740 B.C.). The rich had amassed their wealth at the expense of the poor. Judges sold “justice” to the highest bidder. Merchants were notorious for dishonesty. Immorality and idolatry were practiced openly and shamelessly. Consequently the relevance of Amos to our own affluent society is obvious.

THEME

Type of Literature: Prophecy / Minor Prophet

Halley (page 43): *“Ultimate Universal Rule of David”*

Mitchell: *“God will not indefinitely tolerate evil among His people without chastising them.”*

God’s patience with His people is amazing. He will chasten with lesser plagues; but if this does not provide genuine repentance, His judgment will fall. He loves His people too much to allow them to continue in sin.

Key Word (Nelson’s): The Judgment of Israel - The basic theme of Amos is the coming judgment of Israel because of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of His covenant people.

Key Verses (Nelson’s):

“Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt: You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:1,2).

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it” (Amos 8:11,12).

Key Chapter (Nelson’s): 9 - Set in the midst of the harsh judgments of Amos are some of the greatest prophecies of restoration of Israel anywhere in Scripture. Within the scope of just five verses the future of Israel becomes clear, as the Abrahamic, Davidic, and Palestinian covenants are focused on their climatic fulfillment in the return of the Messiah.

Outline:

- I. Condemnation of the Nations 1,2
 - A. Condemnation of Neighboring Nations 1:1-2:3
In each case, God promised to send “fire” and that He would not “turn away (or cancel) the punishment.” Judgment was inevitable, and would not be revoked.
 - B. Condemnation of God’s people 2:4-16
 - 1. Judah - for despising the Law 2:4,5
 - 2. Israel - for immorality and blasphemy 2:6-16
- II. Denunciation of Israel 3:1-9:10
 - A. Judgment Proclaimed 3-6
 - B. Judgment Pre-figured 7:1-9:10
 - 1. The vision of grasshoppers 7:1-3
Judgment arrested - Amos prays - plague arrested
 - 2. The vision of fire 7:4-6
Judgment arrested - Amos prays - judgment arrested
 - 3. The vision of the plumb line 7:7-9
Judgment assured
 - 4. Historical interlude 7:10-17
The vision of summer fruit 8
 - 5. Judgment imminent 8
The vision of the Lord and the Altar
 - 6. Judgment executed 9:1-10
- III. The Restoration of Israel 9:11-15

RECIPIENTS

Inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel who were experiencing wealth and prosperity - a “golden age” which they assumed was a precursor of things to come but was in fact the last vestiges of a terminal illness. Much as a terminal patient will revive just before they expire. As the literature is prophetic it also concerns us today.

CONTRIBUTION TO CANON

A sovereign, holy, just God will judge sin. He announces it, and even explains it first, but it is certain.

1. God is sovereign (4:12,13; 5:8,9). He judges all nations.
2. God is holy (4:2). He judges sin.
3. God is just (3:2). He judges the sins of His people.
4. God is omnipotent (4:13; 9:5,6)
5. God is omniscient (4:13)
6. God is omnipresent (4:13-9:1-4)
7. God is patient: He didn't judge the first time they sinned (cf. "for three transgressions and for four" in chapters 1,2). He waited for repentance. Furthermore, He announced the judgment first (3:7). Even then, He didn't judge until 40 years and two prophets later (the two prophets were Amos, and after him, Hosea).
8. God is merciful (5:4,6,14,15)
9. God is faithful (9:11-15). God is faithful to judge and to restore. Don't ignore God's justice and faithfulness to restore, or you'll face God's justice and faithfulness to judge.

RESOURCES

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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