

11-2017

Article 30: Amos at a Glance

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Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "Article 30: Amos at a Glance" (2017). *The Owner's Manual File*. 16.
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AMOS AT A GLANCE

This book records the sermons, visions and predictions of Amos, a herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit. In it he warns both Israel and surrounding Gentile nations of soon and severe divine judgment because of their sin, concluding his book with a glowing prediction of Israel's eventual restoration in the millennial kingdom.

BOTTOM LINE INTRODUCTION

FIRE AND BRIMSTONE PREACHING – THE BETHEL CRUSADE.

The book of Amos was named after the prophet Amos, the “Billy Sunday” of the Old Testament. The name Amos means “burden.” As Middle Eastern names are usually meaningful, this name may have referred to his unwelcome birth, or been given as a prophecy of his future ministry to describe his burdened heart over Judah and Israel's sin.

He was from the little town of Tekoa, some five miles from Bethlehem in Judea. Amos was a herdsman (1:1; 7:14-15) and a gatherer of sycamore fruit (7:14). He had not graduated from the school of the prophets, but was called by God to become a lay evangelist.

He was called to be a prophet to the whole house of Jacob (3:1, 13), but chiefly to the Northern Kingdom (7:14-15) at the main sanctuary at Bethel (7:10). Here he conducted his “Greater Samaritan Revival Campaign” and thundered away on the subjects of sin, separation, and sanctification.

Amos ministered during the reigns of Uzziah (king of Judah) and Jeroboam II (king of Israel), beginning his ministry some two years before a mighty earthquake had struck Palestine (1:1). This earthquake was so severe that Zechariah (a later Hebrew prophet) referred to it some 250 years later (see Zech. 14:5). Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us the earthquake happened at the time when God punished King Uzziah with leprosy for his intrusion into the office of the priesthood (see 2 Chron. 26:16-21).

At the time of Amos' ministry, Israel, under powerful King Jeroboam II, was at its zenith of success (see 2 Kings 14:25). But along with the nation's prosperity had come religious perversion.

FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

1. Who? **Amos.** This theologically untrained herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit (Amos 1:1; 7:14, 15) would become the “Billy Sunday” of the Old Testament!
2. What? The **Book of Amos.**
3. When and where? 760 B.C., from the city of Tekoa in northern Israel.
4. Why? To call Israel to repentance.
5. To whom? The northern kingdom of Israel.

KEY EVENTS

1. Vision of the plumb line and Amos' prophecy against the false Bethel priest Amaziah
2. Prophecy describing Israel's continued restlessness and misery until the repentance and restoration of that nation
3. The blessings of restored Israel in the millennial kingdom

KEY INDIVIDUALS

1. **Amos:** a theologically untrained shepherd and fruit picker, called by God to preach against the sins of both Jews and Gentiles and to plead with his people to repent and return to the Lord
2. **Amaziah:** wicked priest of Bethel who bitterly opposed Amos' preaching but was himself rejected and severely punished by God

KEY PLACES

1. **Tekoa:** Amos' hometown, located in the hill country of Judah
2. **Bethel:** one of the two religious cities of Jewish pagan worship (along with Gilgal), and home of the godless priest Amaziah who opposed Amos' ministry

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. Amos is the only Old Testament prophet called from one part of the divided kingdom to prophesy in the other part.
2. Perhaps more than any other Old Testament prophet, Amos shows that an effective minister of God does not need any prescribed level of education or social status; he or she needs only a call from God (7:14-15).
3. H. A. Ironside observes:

"It is ever God's way to prepare His servants in secret for the work they are afterwards to accomplish in public. Moses at the backside of the desert; Gideon on the threshing-floor; David with his "few sheep" out upon the hillside; Daniel refusing to be defiled with the king's meat; John the Baptist in the desert; Peter in his fishing boat; Paul in Arabia; and Amos following the flock and herding the cattle in the wilderness of Tekoa—all alike attest this fact. It is important to observe that only he who has thus learned of God in the school of obscurity is likely to shine in the blaze of publicity." (*Notes on the Minor Prophets*. Loizeaux Brothers, p. 141)
4. Amos is the only biblical book to employ poetic expression, "for three transgressions ... and for four" (used eight times – 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6) which phrase may be better translated, "for three sins of . . . even for four," thus Amos may have intended to express the number seven in poetic fashion, i.e., God complete judgment upon these nations (seven being the number of completeness).

5. His book is the second of two referring to the "seven stars and orion" (5:8). Orion was the southern constellation, seen in November. Thus Amos, like Job (9:9; 38:31) must have often gazed in awe at this heavenly sight.
6. This book gives one of the most chilling descriptions of judgment upon sin by the omniscient and omnipotent God as can be found in all the Bible (see 9:2-3).
7. It also provides us with one of the saddest predictions in the scriptures concerning Israel's tragic wanderings (see 8:11-12).
8. Amos contains a passage which helped the Jerusalem council some seven centuries later to make its great decision. Compare Amos 9:11-12 with Acts 15:14-17.
9. Classic passages in Amos would include:
 - *"Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (3:3, 7).*
 - *"For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name" (4:13).*
 - *"Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name: But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (5:8, 24).*
 - *"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day: Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it" (8:9, 11, 12).*
 - *"Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God" (9:2, 3, 9, 13-15).*

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

1 Kings and Jeremiah:

- Both Elijah (1 Kings 21:17-24) and Jeremiah (20:1-6) pronounced severe judgment upon their godless foes for opposing the work of the Lord as did Amos (7:10-17). Thus:
- Elijah's prediction: that both Ahab and Jezebel would meet violent deaths for murdering Naboth.
- Jeremiah's prediction: that Pashhur, false priest in Jerusalem, would be stripped of his wealth and carried off into Babylon where he would die as a slave.
- Amos' prediction: God's judgment upon Amaziah, false priest of Bethel would be the most severe of all:

"Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land" (Amos 7:17).

TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. The God of Hosts (3:13)
2. The Sifter of Israel (9:9)
3. The Savior of Israel (9:13-15)