



Summary of Amos

Introduction

Amos was a shepherd and prophesied against the northern tribes of Israel and the surrounding nations during the 8th Century BC. The theme of Amos is the universal justice of God. The Israelites clearly expected a 'day of the Lord' when all their enemies would be judged (1:2-2:5). What they were not prepared for was that the judgement of that day would fall on them as well (2:6-9:10). Far from enjoying favoured status, they would be held more accountable than their neighbours.

Chapter One

Amos announces himself as a shepherd living in the time of King Jeroboam and King Uzziah. He receives the Word of God against the northern kingdom of Israel and the surrounding nations who oppose God's people. In this chapter there are specific prophecies against Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom and the Ammonites. All have committed sin upon sin and will be judged accordingly.

Chapter Two

Amos delivers judgement on Moab for its sin against its neighbour Edom, before briefly rebuking the southern kingdom of Judah for neglecting the laws of God. His attention then turns on the northern kingdom of Israel, accusing them of sexual immorality and abusing the poor.

Chapter Three

The sins for which Israel is to be judged are touched upon but not detailed here. Rather, God is simply warning Israel through Amos that judgement is surely coming. The prophet has heard the roar of the lion just as he launches himself on his prey. What can the prophet do but tell what he has heard?

Chapter Four

The oracle is composed of two parts: vv.1-5 and vv.6-13. In the first part, the prophet expands somewhat on the points made in Amos 3:14-15: the sins of self-indulgence built upon oppression (vv.1-3) and of false religion (vv.4-5).

In the second part, God details all the ways in which he had appealed to the Israelites to return to him, yet without response (vv.6-11). There is nothing left but that they must come face to face with the infinite Creator in all his power (vv.12-13).

Chapter Five

The virgin of Israel has fallen, i.e. its people have sinned against God and will be taken into captivity unless they repent. The Lord who made the stars invites Israel to seek him, but not in the vain places of sacrifice such as Gilgal, Bethel and Beer-sheba. Israel perverts justice and treads down the poor. There will be wailing and woe in the day of the Lord. Festival days, sacred assemblies and sacrifices are dismissed because the people keep them with a wrong heart.

Chapter Six

Amos calls on the complacent, i.e. those who believe they have no cause for concern, to consider the other kingdoms stronger than they that had already fallen to Assyria. Instead of mourning and grieving over their sins and those of their nation, the Israelites were treating themselves to the very best of life's pleasures. It was these people, the cream of Israelite society, whom the Assyrians would take first into exile. Israel's paganised religion, their strong fortresses, and their decadent culture would be helpless against the enemy that God was raising up.

Chapter Seven

Amos prophesied that destruction would come in form of locust and devouring fire and he pleaded with the Lord to relent and God was gracious and would not destroy Israel. However, they were so far away from the way they should have been as his people that they would still go into exile.

Amaziah, a priest who worshipped idols at Bethel, reported Amos to the king and also insisted that Amos should return to Judah and not prophesy in Israel again. However, Amos stated he was not a professional prophet earning his living but was warning the people with God's word of judgement; exile that would befall the king, Amaziah and all the people.

Chapter Eight

Because the rich people oppress the poor, the merchants deal dishonestly and the festivals of God are profaned then Israel is likened to a basket of summer fruit that is ripe and about to become rotten. It is fruit that will then be discarded through exile following a dark time of judgement.

Chapter Nine

This final vision has two parts, one negative (vv.1-10) and the other positive (vv.11-15). The negative aspect is the culmination of the previous oracles and visions. God renders as worthless all the sacrifices that the Israelites had given in an attempt to manipulate God on their behalf while they brought reproach to his name with their sinful lives. God would shatter their pagan temples and demand their own lives as sacrifices. However, God's ultimate purpose in judgement is never destruction; it is always restoration. So vv.11-15 depict a day on the other side of judgement when Israel, again recognising the Davidic kingship, would be restored to its land.