

Amos - The Prophet of Doom!

By Keith Greer

The book of Amos contains nine chapters and 146 verses. The name Amos means, "burden," "burden bearer," or "to place a burden upon." Amos was from Tekoa, a town in Judah, located six miles south of Bethlehem and twelve miles south of Jerusalem. Before God called him to be His prophet, Amos was a herdsman and a tender of sycamore trees. Since he spent so much time outdoors, Amos was unimpressed by the luxurious living he found common among his brethren. Amos had his own purpose and would not allow himself to be classed among the guides who, quite frequently, bowed to the people's wishes.

God gave Amos a mission -- to send a sound warning to the Northern Kingdom. He told Amos to go to Bethel, a small town ten miles north of Jerusalem. Bethel was the seat of the chief national sanctuary where Jeroboam II worshipped. Why Bethel? It was here that the people were being led away from true worship and into pagan idolatry. God gave them the land and blessed them greatly, but their conduct showed that they had forgotten Him. Since they knew God loved them, they felt that he would accept any worship they offered. They learned a bitter lesson.

This book, voices God's judgments against the nations.

Damascus, (1:3-5) acted with great cruelty during wartime. This nation took cruelty to new levels -- even going so far as to thresh people with heavy iron in the very places where the grain was threshed.

Gaza, (1:6-8) made slaves of their captives. They took an entire village and sold the inhabitants to Edom. The fire of divine judgment would be their doom.

Tyre, (1:9,10) did not remember the "covenant of brotherhood."

Edom, (1:11,12) was guilty of pursuing his brother with the sword.

Ammon, (1:13-15) used senseless cruelty. Primarily, they were motivated by greed.

Moab, (2:1-3) burned the bones of the dead and turned them into lime!

Judah and Israel would not escape. They, also, would feel God's wrath. Judah's sin was religious apostasy. She sought after false religious teachings, having forgotten God's laws. Israel's sins were many -- injustice, greed, idolatry, immorality, oppressing the poor, taking bribes for false judgments, indifference, and ignoring the divine warnings. Where sin is involved, God is not a respecter of persons!

The book of Amos records five visions:

Vision of locusts, (7:1-3),

Vision of fire (7:4-6),

Vision of the plumb line (7:7-9),

Vision of the summer fruit (8:11-14), and

Vision of the Lord by the altar (9:1-10).

These visions gave to the nations, including God's own people, His very clear message of impending doom. There are many lessons to be learned from Amos. I want to share two of them with you.

Nations reap what they sow. The introductory statement to each nation was: "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions ... and for four, I will turn punishment..." A nation's hope does not lie in great natural resources or wealth, but in the character of her citizens.

God and man cannot walk together unless man agrees with God. "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" {Amos 3:3} This verse shows that unity is impossible when man walks contrary to God's commandments. These days, men talk much about unity. But there can be no unity, not then, not now, as long as we leave truth out of the discussion!

God's patience reached its limit. "The end has come upon My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore." {Amos 8:2} Through Amos, God gave them strong warning; but they did not listen. Will we?