

AMOS

AMOS — GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

The opening verse shows that Amos, like Hosea, was a prophet sent to Israel, though his home, Tekoa, was in Judah. He was contemporary with Hosea for a while, though the latter prophesied longer than he.

After the introduction (1:1-3) there follows a series of messages concerning Gentile nations (1:4-2:3), each beginning with the words "For three transgressions..., and for four, I will not turn away the punishment," an orientalism, meaning that it was not for three or four transgressions merely, but an innumerable number, that the judgments predicted were to fall.

These messages are succeeded by one to Judah (2:4-5) while the remainder of the book is concerned with Israel.

The messages of Amos are more orderly than Hosea, and allow homiletic divisions like the following: The *first*, beginning at ^{<311B>}Amos 2:6 and concluding with the chapter, contains an indictment for sin (vv. 6-8), aggravated by the divine goodness toward them (vv. 9-12); and a declaration of the judgment to follow (vv. 13-15). This sin is greed (v. 6), lust (v. 7), and oppression (v. 8). The marginal references frequently give the meaning of expressions in the prophets. Compare ^{<122B>}Exodus 22:26 with verse 8, for example, and ^{<2412>}Jeremiah 11:21 with verse 12.

God will press them as a cart full of sheaves presseth the ground (2:13, RV). In other words none shall escape the Assyrian hosts when they come down against them (vv. 14-16).

The *second* discourse is limited to the third chapter, and contains, after the introduction, verses 1-2,

- (1) the prophet's justification of his message (vv. 3-8);
- (2) an indictment for sin (vv. 9-10); and
- (3) a declaration of punishment (vv. 11-15).

When God says, "You only have I known," etc., (v. 2), He means what is expressed in ~~(8:16)~~ Deuteronomy 7:6, ~~(14:7)~~ Psalm 147:19-20, and other places. Israel's punishment is proportioned to her privilege.

Amos prophesied because he could not do otherwise, is practically the interpretation of verses 3-8. As two do not walk together except they are agreed, or have made an appointment; as a lion does not roar when it has no prey, etc., so the fact that Amos prophecies is an evidence that Jehovah hath spoken to him (v. 8).

Notice the suggestion of the preservation of a faithful remnant in the "two legs" or "piece of an ear" of a sheep taken out of the mouth of the lion (v. 12). Messages of this character continue till the seventh chapter when a series of visions begins.

In the first vision (vv. 1-3), Jehovah is withholding the coming judgment at the prophet's intercession, and the same is true of the second (vv. 4-6), but not of the rest (vv. 7-9; 8:1-3; 9:1-10).

And yet notice the conclusion of the last message growing out of the vision of the Lord beside the altar (9:8-9). He will not "utterly destroy." He will sift Israel "among all nations" as He has been doing all these centuries, but only the chaff will be destroyed.

This thought is amplified in the epilogue of the book (9:11-15), where the prophet definitely reveals the history of Israel in the latter days:

- (1) the kingdom is to be restored (v. 11);
- (2) Israel is to be the head of the nations (v. 12);
- (3) the land of Palestine is to be greatly increased in fruitfulness (v. 13);
- (4) the cities are to be rebuilt (v. 14);
- (5) the blessing is to be perpetual (v. 15).

QUESTIONS

1. To which kingdom was Amos sent?
2. What orientalism is employed by him and what is its meaning?
3. How do the messages of Amos differ in form from those of Hosea?
4. Name some of the sins of Israel at this time.

5. Have you examined the marginal references?
6. How would you interpret ~~<sup>311B>~~ Amos 2:3-8?
7. What change in the character of Amos' messages take place at chapter 7?
8. What five promises are given Israel for the latter days?