

Amos

Original Historical Setting

Author: Amos

Written: ~760-750 B.C.

Audience: Israelites living the Northern Kingdom of Israel

Occasion: Amos wrote because he was prompted by God to do so. He spoke to a nation of Israel who was complacent as they compared themselves to the surrounding pagan nations.

Timeline:

- ~760 BC – Amos begins his prophetic ministry
- 722 BC – Northern Kingdom of Israel destroyed

World Events that occur simultaneously

- 800 B.C. – Ohio people build earth burial mounds
- 753 B.C. – Rome founded by Romulus
- 716 B.C. – Ethiopia starts 50-year rule of Egypt

Features and Structure

- Amos is easily broken into three main sections:
- **Outline**
 - Ch 1-2 –Eight oracles against surrounding nations
 - Ch 3-6 –Five messages of judgment against Israel
 - Ch 7-9 –Five visions of impending judgment

Key text(s)

- 3:3** – Can two walk together unless they are agreed?
- 4:1** – Cows of Bashan
- 4:12** – Prepare to meet your God.
- 5:24** – Let justice run down like water.

Genre/Literary style

Prophecies written in Hebrew poetry with the structure and style of covenant-lawsuits of the ancient Near East

What to look for

- Notice how the oracles at the beginning of the book focus on all the surrounding pagan nations first. It is almost as if Amos is lulling the Northern Kingdom of Israel into a false sense of security before he let's them have it. They probably began to wake up when the last oracle was against their brothers, the Southern Kingdom of Judah.
- When reading Amos, picture a farm boy from Iowa going to the big city of New York and preaching messages of doom and gloom. Amos was a shepherd from Tekoa who went north to the capital of Israel to deliver his messages.
- Notice the three main topics that Amos emphasizes:
 1. Crimes and injustices...especially against the poor
 2. Worship void of real meaning and heart
 3. The Day of the LORD that won't be as rosy as Israel thinks

Interesting facts

- Civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., drew heavily from the book of Amos for his ideas regarding social injustice. In his "I Have a Dream" speech, he said that "...we will not be satisfied until 'justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.'" Amos 5:24
- Some feel that Amos may have been the first Biblical prophet to write down his messages.
- In addition to the well-known African and Indian elephants, there used to be an Asian species that lived in Syria. They became extinct about the time of Amos, because of cultivation of the land and the hunt for ivory. This was the background of Amos' sharp criticism of the upper class who built houses and beds of ivory.
- Here is the name Amos in Morse Code: .-----...

Memory Verse: Amos 5:15