The Book of Amos

Zanesville, OH | Sunday AM Bible Study

**Chapter 3**

* **3:1-8– God will punish His chosen people**
* V. 1 calls the people to listen to the words the LORD has spoken against them (3:1; 4:1; 5:1). *“Entire family”* is used perhaps to include also Judah since God brought them all out of Egypt (Neh. 9:8-12; Mic. 6:4). God has spoken to them both in 2:4-16. Kingdom wasn’t divided until 1 Kings 12.
* V. 2 is a striking emphasis that God chose Israel from among all the inhabitants of the earth. He could have chosen any one, but He chose to make a covenant with them (Ex. 19:5-6; Deut. 7:6, 26:18). God chose Israel not because they were such a great people and they stood out more than the others, but it was a divine, sovereign choice made by God. Since God chose these people for Himself, they were called to obey His commandments and do His will which gave them a higher sense of responsibility than their neighbors. As a result, He will punish them for their sins and their evil (Lev. 26:14-39; Deut. 28:15-68). Hebrew word for *“punish”* (paqad) is the same word that’s translated visit in other places in the Old Testament. It can be used positively (Gen. 50:24-25; Ex. 3:16) or negatively (Ex. 20:5; 34:7). This may be why Israel thinks the day of the LORD will be a cause for celebration and not for fear.
* This next section of vv. 3-6 lists a series of questions that examine the relationship of cause and effect. It is done in this manner either to show Israel that God’s judgment is the effect of their sin or it is an apologia by Amos.
* 6 of the 7 questions in vv. 3-6 use imagery of disaster and fear to incite the people to understand either the severity of their sin or the importance of God’s prophets.
* V. 6 heightens the idea of judgment with talk of blowing a trumpet and the coming of calamity. Blowing trumpet associated with judgment (Jer. 4:5; 6:1; Ezek. 33:3; Hos. 5:8) and the LORD being behind the calamity (Isa. 14:24-27; 45:7; Jer. 5:22; 10:7).
* In v. 7, God does not necessarily act without warning. He has declared His messages via the prophets (Gen. 18:17; Isa. 6; Jer. 1). The people are warned before the judgment.
* V. 8 recalls the fear and warning of 1:2. The LORD roars from Zion. God has spoken, who can but prophesy? The LORD’S message must be brought forth (Jer. 20:9; Acts 4:20).
* **3:9-10– Heathen’s are called to witness Israel’s sin**
* In vv. 9-10, the Philistines and the Egyptians are called to witness the oppression and great tumults in Samaria. This statement is an irony of the highest magnitude. The Israelites looked at everyone else’s actions around them as inhumane and utterly detestable, but they were throwing stones when they themselves had glass windows.
* Concerning the witnesses called by God to witness Israel’s sin, Hubbard says: *“Their reputations for injustice and brutality would be resented by the Israelites, who would consider themselves in every way morally superior to those whom God had summoned as witnesses.” It will also “show that covenant law is not the only criterion for testing Israel’s behavior but that by any standards of international decency they have become culprits.”* (Hubbard).
* In v. 10 you can almost hear how heartbroken God is. The people don’t know how to do what is right and all they do is hoard up for themselves violence and devastation (Jer. 4:22; 5:4; Hab. 2:8-11).
* **3:11-15– God will judge Israel for their violence**
* In v. 11, as a result of their evil and wickedness, God will bring an enemy against them that will make them weak and take everything they have (2 Kings 15:19, 29; 17:3-6; 18:9-11; Isa. 7:17-25; 8:7-8; 10:5-6). Israel looted other nations (Hab. 2:8-11) so they will be looted in return (Lex Talionis).
* In v. 12, Israel will be destroyed in a horrific manner and all that will be left will be like the legs of the sheep that are left in the lion’s mouth (Ex. 22:10-13). The scraps of their valuable materials that they have so luxuriously enjoyed will be taken away with them.
* *“Amos’ comparison, then, makes the sarcastic point that when invasion strikes Israel’s devastation will be so complete that all that will be rescued is proof of death in the form of scraps of furniture.”* (Hubbard).
* In v. 13, let this message be a testimony to the people (Deut. 30:18-19; 2 Kings 17:13; 2 Chron. 24:19). Probably speaking to Egyptians and Philistines. The House of Jacob is a reference to Israel.
* V. 14, punishment for sins, punishing Bethel’s altars and horns.
* Short excursus on Bethel by Easton’s Bible Dictionary:

**Bethel: House of God**

* A place in Central Palestine, about 10 miles north of Jerusalem, at the head of the pass of Michmash and Ai. It was originally the royal Canaanite city of Luz (Gen. 28:19). The name Bethel was at first apparently given to the sanctuary in the neighborhood of Luz and was not given to the city itself till after its conquest by the tribe of Ephraim. When Abram entered Canaan, he formed his second encampment between Bethel and Hai (Gen. 12:8); and on his return from Egypt he came back to it, and again “called upon the name of the Lord” (Gen. 13:4).
* Here Jacob, on his way from Beersheba to Haran, had a vision of the angels of God ascending and descending on the ladder whose top reached unto heaven (Gen. 28:10, Gen. 28:19); and on his return he again visited this place, “where God talked with him” (Gen. 35:1-15), and there he “built an altar, and called the place El-beth-el” (q.v.). To this second occasion of God's speaking with Jacob at Bethel, Hosea (Hos. 12:4-5) makes reference.
* In troublous times the people went to Bethel to ask counsel of God (Judg. 20:18, Judg. 20:31; Judg. 21:2). Here the ark of the covenant was kept for a long time under the care of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron (Judg. 20:26-28). Here also Samuel held in rotation his court of justice (1Sam. 7:16).
* It was included in Israel after the kingdom was divided, and it became one of the seats of the worship of the golden calf (1 Kings 12:28-33; 1 Kings 13:1). Hence the prophet Hosea (Hos. 4:15; Hos. 5:8; Hos. 10:5, Hos. 10:8) calls it in contempt Beth-aven, i.e., “house of idols.” Bethel remained an abode of priests even after the kingdom of Israel was desolated by the king of Assyria (2 Kings 17:28, 2 Kings 17:29). At length all traces of the idolatries were extirpated by Josiah, king of Judah (2 Kings 23:15-18); and the place was still in existence after the Captivity (Ezra 2:28; Neh. 7:32).
* *“Horns of the altar”* were thought of to be a place of safety and strength. Butler says: *“The smiting off of the horns of the altar signifies the complete destruction of the altar. It may also have this special significance: the four horns on the four corners of the altar of burnt offering (Ex. 27:2), to which the sacrificial blood was applied (Ex. 29:12; Lev. 4:25-34; 8:15), were symbolic of sure, reliable forgiveness and salvation. To these horns clung the guilty transgressors for safety (I Kings 1:50; 2:28-38; Ex. 21:14). So, even the symbols of salvation were to be torn off the altars of Bethel, which had neither God’s permission nor promise, no right of existence, no authority to forgive sins, no power to save.”* (Butler).
* In v. 15, the winter and summer house will be destroyed. This may be referring to their luxurious houses or royal palaces (Jer. 36:22; 1 Kings 21:1, 18; 22:39). Their great houses of riches and ivory will perish, and they will come to an end (Isa. 5:9). What a great reminder that these things don’t last forever, and our focus should be elsewhere.