

God's spokesperson for
Justice

Amos – who was he?

- Not – a professional prophet
- Not – a priest
- But – a Shepherd and Arborist... a modern day farmer!
- A well educated man, who knew the history of Israel and the nations surrounding it.
- His prophetic ‘utterances’ were mainly between 760 and 750 BC
- The book of Amos compiles a lifetime of his unpopular preaching!!

920	Division of the Kingdom Rehoboam (<i>Jeroboam I</i>)	
850	(<i>Ahab and Jezebel, Jehu</i>)	Elijah and Elisha
750- 720	Fall of Nth Kingdom to Assyria (<i>Jeroboam II</i>) Jotham, Ahaz	Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jonah
700- 620	Failed Assyrian invasion of Judah Hezekiah, Josiah	Isaiah, Micah
605- 586	Babylon becomes world power, exile of Israelites, Jerusalem destroyed	Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, Daniel
538	Babylon defeated by Persia, exiles return	Daniel
520- 450	Rebuilding of temple, Jerusalem wall Zerubbabel, Nehemiah	Zechariah, Haggai, Ezra, Malachi
6-4	Birth of Jesus	

What Amaziah the Priest said to King Jeraboam II (of Israel), about Amos...

- He is raising a conspiracy against you, in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear his words.
- This is what Amos has said:-
- Jeraboam will die by the sword and Israel will go into exile away from their native land... (Ch 7 vs 10-13)
- Amaziah's reply from the King to Amos...'Get out you seer'... go back to Judah... earn your bread there...'This is the King's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom'.
- This exchange took place in an era of national wealth, complacency, and religiosity

Where Amos begins his prophecies

- Directed to the neighboring nations...(not too close to home!)
- THIS IS WHAT THE LORD SAYS:_
 - To Damascus (renowned for their brutality)
 - To Gaza (involved in the slave trade)
 - To Tyre (slave sellers)
 - To Edom (persistently hostile)
 - To Ammon (known for greed and genocide)
 - To Moab (violations of burial protocols)

Judgements pronounced – on those violating laws of humanity...

- I will send fire... I will destroy...I will swallow up your fortresses...
- And then Amos turns his attention closer to home:-
- To **Judah and Israel** - the southern and northern Kingdoms.....Who disobeyed the **revealed law of God** (Ch2 vs 4)
- What had THEY done?
 - Trampled the poor
 - Denied justice to the needy
 - Forgotten their morals
 - Distained prophets.....

Amos reminds the people of God's care of them and infinite patience:-

- God called them '**the whole family I brought up from Egypt**'
- He reminds them how he aimed to get their attention by allowing difficult circumstances (famines, blight, floods, insect plagues)

There is recorded five times, a cry of despair – '**Yet you have not returned to me!**'

- And finally the pronouncements '**You will be judged**'.
- '**Prepare to meet you God oh Israel**'.

A merciful God offers his people a chance to repent.

- He still does this today and to us the pre-paid offer, as on the Cross, Jesus took on himself our sins – PTL!

Amos Ch 5 - opens with a Lament

- Fallen is Virgin Israel – never to rise again
- And then: A call to repentance:-
 - Seek **me** and live...Seek the Lord and live (vs 4 and 6)
 - I know your many offenses and how great are your sins (vs 12)
 - Seek good and not evil that you may live, then the Lord Almighty will be with you (v 14)
 - I despise your religious feasts, I will not listen to the music of your harps (vs 21-23)
- I will send you into exile beyond Damascus says the Lord whose name is God Almighty (v 27)

At the heart of these accusations a positive plea!

- Let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream (v 24)
- More challenges to the deaf ears:-Chapter 6
- Judah....you are renowned for your complacency (living the high life...vs 4-6)
- Israel....you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness.(v 12)

Two and a half more chapters -7&8 and 9

- Amos pleads with God, not to bring about a famine (locusts in the harvest) and drought and God relents (His great mercy)
- But God explains to Amos that He has a plumb line applied to his people Israel and he will not spare them punishment
- He shows Amos a basket of ripe fruit and says he will no longer spare them... the time is ripe...

But Restoration WILL FOLLOW

- Surely the eyes of the sovereign Lord are on the sinful kingdom – I will destroy it - YET I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob! Ch 9vs 8
- I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, they will plant vineyards and drink their wine!
- I will plant Israel in their own land never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them
 - **SAYS THE LORD YOUR GOD.....**

What do we make of Amos' words?

- He was a courageous servant of the most high
- He spoke the truth as GOD revealed it
- He denounced selfish and affluent lifestyles - blindness to the needs around them
- It's all about **Justice!** -
- Is it a problem of 'others' or 'ours'?

What Jesus' disciples are called to do and be

- Jesus call to justice is summarized in Mathew 's gospel in the 'sermon on the mount' (Mathew Ch 5)
- We are to act **for the good of others**....which goes beyond the letter of 'the law' to the spirit of the law
- ...'I have not come to abolish the Law or the prophets...I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them....(Ch5 vs 17)

The bottom line!

- **In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets (Ch7 vs 12)**