

St Andrew's

ROSEVILLE

GROWING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST



Preaching Program & Bible Studies
Term 2, 2024

Introduction:

Let me start out these studies with a moment of honesty – I find looking at some of the Old Testament hard. I find it hard for a few reasons. First, especially in some of the prophets, I find it repetitive and full of God’s judgment. Secondly, God often uses illustrations and places that I simply don’t know nor understand. Thirdly, it is often just hard going reading through some of the Old Testament and often I find myself thinking – how on earth is this applicable to me?

So, why go to a book like Amos in a year of Evangelism? I wonder whether you will find yourself asking this question over the coming weeks – I know I have in my preparation.

Well, let me give you an answer.

First, we know that *all* Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training people in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). When Paul said this, he was referring to the Old Testament. Secondly, I am convinced that we need to teach the *whole* counsel of God (Acts 20:27) and so this includes passages like this. Thirdly, as we understand these passages better, we can help explain it to those who also find it hard. We can give an answer for what we believe (1 Peter 3:15). Finally, just because something is hard, does not mean it is not helpful for us. We just need to work harder in order to see what it has to teach us.

So, with this in mind, what are some of the background to Amos?

The book of Amos comes about 200 years since the rule of King David, which was the highpoint in the nation of Israel. After the rule of King David’s son Solomon, the Kingdom of Israel was divided into two. The Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Southern Kingdom of Judah incorporated Jerusalem, and more importantly, the temple where the worship of God took place. The first King of Judah, Jeroboam provided alternate places for the worship of God in Israel, so people did not need to go to the temple to offer sacrifices to God. He set up idols in Bethel and Dan and said to the people, *“It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.”* (1 Kings 12:28). This was a clear breach of the first and second commandment. The seriousness of this sin is made clear in 1 Kings 13:33-34.

It is into this situation that God sent his prophets to both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms. The role of the prophets is outlined in 2 Kings 17:13 that says; *The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: “Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your ancestors to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets.*

Amos lived in the first half of the eighth century, during the reign of King Jeroboam II in Israel and King Uzziah in Judah – so around 790BC – 740BC. His preaching was to those in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. However, Amos himself was from Tekoa, which is

likely a town near Bethlehem in Judah. It was here that the word of God came to him when he was a shepherd.

Amos prophesied at a time of great prosperity for Israel. Under Jeroboam II Israel had expanded her territory. However, in the background, the Assyrian army was growing and so his preaching comes with this growing threat of invasion. Some of the theological themes that come out of this book are God's divine sovereignty and judgment, Idolatry and social injustice, The covenant and the remnant, The day of the Lord and God's word.

If I was to focus on one takeaway from Amos, what would it be?

While I hope that we find out a lot about Amos, if I was to focus on one take away it would be **to be wary about the trappings of wealth and prosperity**. As Israel's wealth and prosperity grows, it leads them to thinking that they are in no need of God. For us living in Sydney now, we are going through a time of unprecedented wealth and prosperity. Our standard of living is one of the highest in the world and the result of this, is that people living in Sydney don't see the need for God. We have not seen wars or famine or major death from disease, like many other countries in the world – even today! For example, the impact of COVID in Australia compared to other countries, was minimal. For some African countries, COVID was simply another disease among the multitude of deadly diseases that they face on a day-to-day basis. So, in this way, those living in Sydney today are similar to Israel in the time of Amos. Like Israel needed 'rousing' from their slumber, knowing that the day of judgment was approaching, so do we living here in Sydney in 2024.

So, it is my hope that Amos inspires us to live for God, more than the things of this world.

In Christ,

Mal York
St Andrew's Roseville April 2024.

How to use these studies:

This term, we will spend 4 out of the 10 weeks doing a 'Taste and See' course with our groups, which means you will not do all of these studies in your group. However, we have given you these full studies so that you can do the passages that you miss out on in the group, on your own.

The questions are broken up into four categories:

1. An introduction question.
2. The main questions on the passage.
3. Application Questions.
4. A personal reflection question.

The introduction question should not take long (2-3 minutes) and the idea is to get you thinking about the topic.

The main questions should take you the bulk of time, around 20-30min to get through, depending on your discussion.

The application questions will generally get you looking at the New Testament and thinking about how the principles from the Old Testament apply to us. Again, these should not take too long, maybe 5-10min, depending on the discussion.

Finally, it is good to give everyone the opportunity to do the reflection question – but this does not need to be shared in the group. This is meant to be a personal time. So, make sure you set aside 5min at the end for this type of reflection.

You will notice that there is also time for prayer at the beginning and the end, this is essential and so should be factored in for your small group.

These studies focus more on the principles that we learn from Amos that are applicable for us today, than the specific details within the passage. If people would like to delve further into the details, then I recommend getting a commentary on Amos. I have been using a commentary in the New International Commentary Old Testament Series called: *The Book of Amos* by M. Daniel Carroll R. As well as *12 Books to change your life* (Teaching on the minor prophets) by David Cook and Grant Thorp.

In Christ,

Mal York

St Andrew's Roseville April 2024

Study 1 – 05/05/24

Amos 1-2:5 The problem of guilt

Pray.

Introduction Question:

How should we respond to injustice in the world today?

Read Amos 1-2:5.

Questions:

1. Are there any questions from the passage?
2. Read 2 Kings 14:7-18. How does this passage help us to understand as to why God would send Amos to Israel?
3. What image is used of God in Amos 1:2 and what does this tell us about what is to come?
4. God's judgment is pronounced upon Aram (Damascus), Philistia (Gaza), Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab in verses 1:3- 2:1, what have they done wrong?
5. The judgment on Judah is different in verses 2:4-5. Why is this different?
6. What does this tell us about the concerns of God for those not under the law and those who are?
7. Reflect on God's judgment seen in this passage. Is God just in his judgment?

Application:

Read Romans 1:28-2:11

8. Have the concerns of God changed for us today?
9. Is it important that people know about the judgment of God? Why or why not?

Personal Reflection:

10. How does knowing the concerns of God and the judgement of God impact me?

Prayer.

Study 2 – 12/05/24

Amos 2:6-3:2 The peril of privilege

Pray.

Introduction Question:

Why can discipline be good for someone?

Read Amos 2:6-3:2.

Questions:

1. Are there any questions from the passage?
2. What has Israel done wrong in verses 6-8?
3. Why should Israel know better (vs 9-11)?
4. When Israel commands the prophets not to prophesy in verse 12, what are they really wanting?
5. Thinking back to last week's study, what does this tell us about how God treats those who 'more knowledge' yet still sin?
6. How does God's judgment play out for Israel in these verses 2:13 – 3:2?
7. Why would God judge his own people in this way? What does this teach us about being in a relationship with God?

Application:

Read Hebrews 12:4-11

8. Why do people today reject the idea of discipline and hardship in the Christian life?
9. What does Hebrews say discipline is a sign of? What does discipline produce?

Personal Reflection:

10. How does knowing that God's disciplines us, make you approach enduring hardships?

Prayer.

Study 3 – 19/05/24

Amos 3:3-15 Compelled & terrified by truth

Pray.

Introduction Question:

What are the benefits and trappings of being a wealthy Christian?

Read Amos 3:3-15.

Questions:

1. Are there any questions from the passage?
2. Verses 3-6 are rhetorical questions to Israel. What is God's point in asking them?
3. What type of people is God sending his prophets to (vs 10)? In what way is this similar to people who live in Sydney?
4. What is God's plan for Israel (vs 11-15)?
5. Is there any hope for anyone when this judgment of God comes?
6. What does God's destruction seemed to be aimed at (vs 14-15)?
7. Is there any sense of mercy in the passage, or is it all judgment (vs 12)?

Application:

Read Luke 12:16-21

8. What is the rich fool's problem in the passage?
9. What does it mean to be 'rich towards God'?

Personal Reflection:

10. How can I be rich towards God?

Prayer.

Study 4 - 26/05/24

Amos 4 Prepare to meet your God

Pray.

Introduction Question:

If you died tonight, how do you know if you are prepared to meet God?

Read Amos 4.

Questions:

1. Are there any questions from the passage?
2. What issues does God have with the women of Israel (4:1)?
3. How does God 'swearing by his holiness' raise the stakes here (vs 2)?
4. What is wrong with Israel's worship of God in verses 4-5?
5. Are there aspects of our worship of God today that could have the same outcome for us?
6. How does God interpret many events, that could be interpreted by us as natural disasters (7-10)?
7. What emotions are meant to be evoked by the description of God in verse 13?

Application:

Read Luke 13:1-5

8. Jesus highlights a couple of disasters that had happened. How does he urge his disciples to respond to these events?
9. Do you think that this means he does not care? Why does he respond in this way?

Personal Reflection:

10. Are you prepared to meet God?

Prayer.

Study 5 – 02/06/24

Amos 5:1-17 Showing the mercy of God

Pray.

Introduction Question:

Do you think having money makes people more or less concerned for the poor?

Read Amos 5:1-17.

Questions:

1. Are there any questions from the passage?
2. What is the picture that God is giving to Israel in verses 1-3?
3. Throughout verses 4-17, God gives two courses of actions in light of this upcoming destruction. What are they?
4. God highlights more ways that Israel is not caring for her people in verses 7-11. What are they and do you see the same problems in the world today?
5. Why might it be prudent to be quiet when the times are evil (vs 13)?
6. How should be people living, according to verse 15?
7. Notice the change in language in verse 15. Why will God now only show mercy to the remnant?
8. What is the outcome of God's coming judgment (vs 16-17)?

Application:

Read James 2:5-13

9. God still has a concern for the poor and that his followers show mercy. How does James use the coming judgment of God as a way to urge people to show mercy?
10. What does it mean to 'speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom'?

Personal Reflection:

11. How are you showing mercy to those around you?

Prayer.

Study 6 – 09/06/24

Amos 5:18-27 Why religion is useless.

Pray.

Introduction Question:

What are the benefits and pitfalls of religious practices?

Read Amos 5:18-27.

Questions:

1. Are there any questions from the passage?
2. What is the 'Day of the Lord' Amos is referring to in vs 18?
3. Why does Amos 'woe' those who look long for the day of the Lord (vs 18)?
4. Why would the 'Day of the Lord' be like this for the people of Israel, God's chosen people (vs 19-20)?
5. What practices does God hate in verses 21-23?
6. In what ways may some of our religious practices be 'hated' by God in the church today?
7. How have the practices of Israel changed, since they were wandering in the desert for 40 years?

Application:

Read Colossians 2:6-19

8. Where should our 'religious identity' be found?
9. What ways can we as a church ensure that our 'religious practices' do not become empty religiosity?

Personal Reflection:

10. How are you continuing to live your life in Christ?

Prayer.

Study 7 – 16/06/24

Amos 6 False confidence

Pray.

Introduction Question:

How can pride be at the same time a good thing and a bad thing?

Read Amos 6.

Questions:

1. Are there any questions from the passage?
2. What is wrong with Israel's complacency and feeling of security?
3. Kalneh, Hamath and Gath has all been conquered by Assyria. Why would God want Israel to look at what happened to them?
4. The ruin of Joseph is alluding to the ruin of Israel from the connection to the faith of their forefathers. What indications does God give that they are no longer concerned with their spiritual state in verses 3-6?
5. In what ways can our pride cause us to become lazy as Christians?
6. God's judgment on those who live like this will be first. What becomes of the accumulation of wealth when this happens?
7. Their small victory over Lo Debar has caused Israel to boast about their great strength. What will the reality of God's judgment show them?

Application:

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-2:5

8. Being wise by human standards, being influential and of noble birth are qualities held highly in the world around us. How does God subvert these?
9. How does preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified alone without wise and persuasive words help to keep pride at bay? What does this look like?

Personal Reflection:

10. How do you boast in the Lord to your family, friends and colleagues?

Prayer.

Study 8 – 23/06/24

Amos 7 No more mercy?

Pray.

Introduction Question:

Have you ever had to have a hard, honest conversation with someone about something negative? Why didn't you back down?

Read Amos 7.

Questions:

1. Are there any questions from the passage?
2. The Lord plans for judgment twice in verses 1-6, but Amos intercedes. What does this tell us about intercession (prayer – 1 Peter 3:12)?
3. The third plan of judgment is not stopped by Amos. Why?
4. It was not an easy job being a prophet of God. What does Amaziah the priest's response in verse 12 show about the state of Israel?
5. How does the response of Amaziah reflect the world around us when it comes to proclamation of the gospel?
6. We read more about how Amos became a prophet. What does this teach us about becoming a prophet?
7. Why doesn't Amos stop prophesying and head back to Judah and his former job of shepherding?

Application:

Read 1 Cor 9:12b- 27

8. Paul's life is to preach the gospel and win people for Christ. Why can't he stop preaching the gospel?
9. What does it mean to run in such a way as to get the prize?

Personal Reflection:

10. As you hear God's word, are you inspired to want to share this with others?

Prayer.

Study 9 – 30/06/24

Amos 8 A famine of hearing God's word

Pray.

Introduction Question:

What have been characteristic of times in your life when you have found being a Christian hard?

Read Amos 8.

Questions:

1. Are there any questions from the passage?
2. The imagery of the basket of ripe fruit is normally used to celebrate the first fruits of the harvest. How does God turn this around?
3. What time does 'In that day' refer to?
4. The picture of judgment in verse 3 is graphic. Why would God use such graphic language here?
5. How have Israel been robbing the poor and needy?
6. What are some characteristics of when God's judgment will come?
7. Why is the famine of God's word worse than a famine of food and water? What does it indicate?

Application:

Read Luke 23: 44-47

8. How does Amos 8:9-10 find its fulfillment in Luke 23:44?
9. What confidence does this give us that God's plan was always to deal with the sin of the world through Jesus?

Personal Reflection:

10. How can you make sure that God's word is not a famine in your life?

Prayer.

Study 10 – 07/07/24

Amos 9 Hope, despite judgment.

Pray.

Introduction Question:

How does something good in your future, help you in the present? (Maybe an upcoming holiday?)

Read Amos 9.

Questions:

1. Are there any questions from the passage?
2. What might God standing by the alter indicate in verse 1?
3. How is God's judgment comprehensive in verses 2-3?
4. In verses 5-6, we see the might of the Lord. What does this teach us about him?
5. What sort of response is this description of God meant to evoke?
6. The Cushites were a long way from Israel (modern Sudan) and had been a defeated enemy of Israel in the past. As God compares Israel to them, what does this show about the depth of his feelings towards Israel?
7. Notice how the phrase 'In that day' (study 9) starts off the promise of restoration in verse 11. What does that say about God's judgment and restoration?
8. What are the characteristics of the restoration of Israel? How do they contrast against the judgment of God we have seen in Amos?

Application:

Read Rev 21:1-7; 22:1-5

9. What is so great about Revelation's depiction of eternity?
10. Share with the group what you are looking forward to about an eternity with Christ?

Personal Reflection:

11. Are the words of Revelation 21.1-7 'trustworthy and true' to you?

Prayer.

