AMOS BIBLE SURVEY

Background: The name Amos means “burden” or “burden bearer” in Hebrew. Amos was a herdsman and a cultivator of sycamore trees (Amos 1:1; 7:14), when the Lord called him to be a prophet. He lived in the village of Tekra, about eleven miles from Jerusalem, during the reigns of Uzziah in Judah (792-740 B.C.) and Jeroboam II in the Northern Kingdom of Israel (793-753 B.C.).

Amos was a “layman”, a humble farmer and shepherd who was not an official member of the Jewish religious or political establishment. Luxury abounded (3:10-15; 6:1-6), and the rich exploited the poor, the judicial system (courts) were corrupt, and injustice flourished (5:11-15, 24; 8:4-6). “Religion” was popular, and Israel flocked to the royal chapel at Bethel (4:4-5; 7:13).

During Amos’s day, the people of the Northern Kingdom felt politically, economically, and religiously secure. Economically, the good times had led to social corruption, violence, and injustice. The worship of the Lord had been comprised by idolatry. Amos warned that injustice, immorality and idolatry would bring divine judgment in the form of exile to Israel. In 722 B.C. Israel was conquered by the nation of Assyria (2 Kings 17:5-6).

Key Text: Amos 5:24 “but let justice run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.”

Key Term: “Injustice”. When the poor and the oppressed appealed to the local judges for justice, the wealthy landowners bought off the judges.

Themes: A call for social justice, luxury, and idolatry

Summary: Although Amos prophesied against the nations surrounding Israel, including Judah; his main message was against Israel.

When the events of this book happened: Amos prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (7930753 B.C.) while Uzziah, king of Judah, ruled (792-740 B.C.) See Amos (1:1)
Second Kings (14:23-15:6) and 2 Chronicles 25 provide the two kings mentioned in Amos. Both kingdoms were experiencing their “golden age” of peace and prosperity.

**Author and Date of writing:** Amos, possible around 762 B.C. His ministry was two years before a notable earthquake (Amos 1:1; Zephaniah 14:5). Archeological excavations at Hazor and Samaria have uncovered evidence of a violent earthquake in Israel (760 B.C.)

**The message:** Amos’s message was perhaps as startling and well received as would be a farm boy from Nebraska preaching in Manhattan. Amos was called to prophesy to Israel, the Northern Kingdom. The message God gave him, was primarily one of judgment, though it ended with words of hope (Amos 9:11-15).

Amos ministry was short. He probably stayed in Bethel anywhere from a few days to a few months. Amos went from Tekoa, delivered his prophetic messages and returned home within forty years, Israel was conquered by Assyria.

**The Message of Justice and Judgment:**

**Justice:** the dominant theme is clearly stated in Amos 5:24. “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream.” “Justice“ was the proper functioning of judicial procedures that enabled a count to declare who or what was right in a given case.

“Righteousness” was the behavior of one who sought this end, who did “right” to those involved in the case. Nowhere was justice and righteousness more crucial than the counts. Here the weaker members of society, those without money or influence, could receive protection from the oppressors and find fairness under the law.

But the nation of Israel had turned justice into “bitterness and poison” (Amos 5:7. 10; 6:12).

**Judgment:** Judgment against the nations (1:3 – 2:5), but mainly against Israel (the Northern Kingdom,) that’s where Amos was sent to. (See Amos 3:1, 5:1, 6, 6:1)