

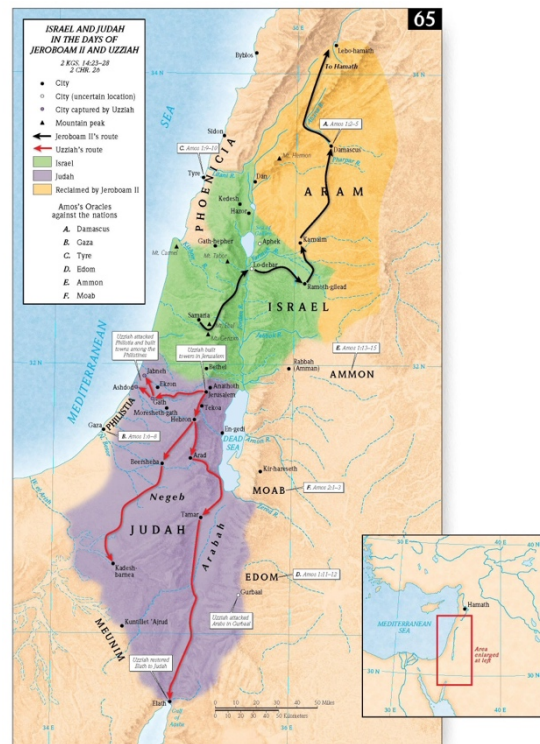
SPENDING TIME WITH THE PROPHETS

the book of Amos

Setting of the book:

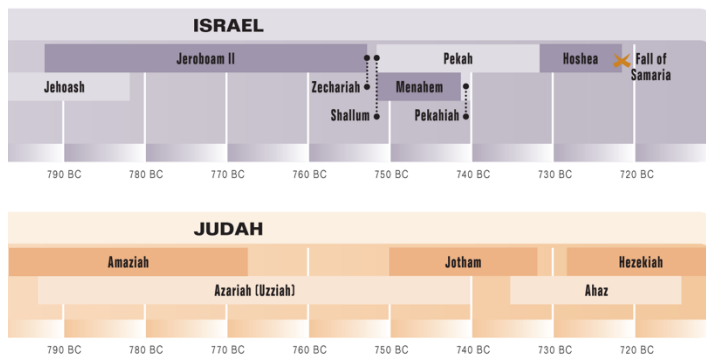
While the nation of Israel had been brought very low by Syria, their neighbor to the north (see 2Kings 13.2-7), both Israel and Judah had a resurgence during the respective reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah (Amaziah). During our study of Jonah, we noted that this was according to the word of the prophet (2Kings 14.25) and was aided by Assyria attacking the Syrian capital of Damascus in 804 B.C. As Jeroboam II increased the borders of Israel the resulting spoils of war and increased trade would have increased the prosperity of the nation.

No doubt the people of Israel thought all was well, even assuming that the Lord was blessing them. However, “as their economic well-being and national strength continued to foster their security, an internal decay was eating at their vitals. It was primarily moral because it involved a basic violation of the covenant established by God at Sinai.”¹ This moral corruption was seen in Israel’s idolatrous practices and in their treatment of their brethren. Israel had become wealthy, but that wealth was enjoyed by only a few and those in



the upper levels of society had ignored and oppressed the poor.

Into this setting of opulence and corruption God sent a “herdsman and grower of sycamore figs” (Amos 7.14). Amos was from the small town of Tekoa (~5 miles from Bethlehem in Judah), but God would use him to warn and rebuke the high and mighty of Israel.



¹ McComiskey, Thomas E. “Amos.” In *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, Vol. 7. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986.

Outline of the book:

1. Intro: The Lord Roars! (Amos 1.1-2)
2. Judgments on Israel's neighbors (Amos 1.3-2.5)
 - a. On foreign nations: Damascus, Gaza and Tyre (Amos 1.3-10)
 - b. On blood relatives: Edom, Ammon and Moab (Amos 1.11-2.3)
 - c. On Israel's sister Judah (Amos 2.4-5)
3. Judgment on Israel (Amos 2.6-6.14)
 - a. Introductory announcement of judgment (Amos 2.6-16)
 - b. The Lion roars (Amos 3.1-15; cf. Amos 1.2)
 - i. Will the Lion roar when there is no prey? (3.1-7)
 - ii. Answer: the Lord has roared and Israel is prey to the nations (3.8-11)
 - iii. Israel consumed like a lamb in a lion's mouth (3.12-15)
 - c. Why judgment was coming (Amos 4.1-13)
 - i. Because of oppression (4.1-3)
 - ii. Because of false worship (4.4-5)
 - iii. Because they did not repent (4.6-13)
 - d. Lament for Israel's fall (Amos 5.1-17)
 - i. Fall declared (5.1-3)
 - ii. The Lord's entreaty (5.4-9)
 - iii. Israel rejects God's messengers (5.10-13)
 - iv. Admonition (5.14-15)
 - v. Wailing when the Lord comes (5.16-17)
 - e. Oracles of woe (Amos 5.18-6.14)
 - i. For "the day of the Lord" is coming (5.18-27)
 - 1) Israel's false hope for "the day of the Lord" (5.18-20)
 - 2) The Lord despised their "religion" (5.21-27)
 - ii. Woe to those at ease (6.1-14)
4. Visions of Judgment (Amos 7.1-9.10)
 - a. 3 visions = judgment is certain (Amos 7.1-9)
 - b. Amaziah's rejection (Amos 7.10-17)
 - c. Vision of summer fruit (Amos 8.1-14)
 - d. Vision of the Lord beside the altar (Amos 9.1-10)
 - i. Note: this would have been the altar at Bethel where Jeroboam I set up one of the golden calves (1Kings 12.25-33; cf. Amos 3.14)
5. Future hope (Amos 9.11-15)

Application:

1. Do not equate prosperity with being blessed by the Lord. As we noted in the introduction, during the days of Amos' prophecy Israel had experienced military success and economic prosperity. They took this as a sign of the Lord's favor and even spoke excitedly of "the day of the Lord" (5.18). In doing so they were fools, failing to see that

the Lord's blessings were contingent on their faithfulness to His covenant (5.14-15). They basked in their prosperity and were punished for it (6.1-7). The day of the Lord was coming, but it would not be a pleasant day for them (5.18-20). We must not forget that faithfulness to the Lord will often result in difficult times rather than lives of ease (Matthew 5.10-12; Romans 8.17).

2. Social justice is of everlasting importance to the Lord. This was encapsulated in the commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19.18; Luke 10.25-37). Yet, the rich and powerful of Israel had utterly failed to show compassion for their less fortunate brethren (2.6-7; 5.1; 6.12; etc.). They would be punished for this failure (6.1-7). While the Scriptures do not reveal that the purpose of the church is to alleviate the social ills around us (save by the gospel, 2Timothy 2.5), the people of God are to always be concerned with the plight of their neighbor. Whether for the less fortunate among us (1John 3.15-18) or those not of this body (1Timothy 6.17-19; Galatians 6.10), the Lord wants us to be a people full of compassion.

Messianic elements in the book:

Much of Amos' message was spent rebuking Israel for her sins and pointing to the Lord's impending judgment. However, there are a couple of Messianic elements in the book. First, the Lord's willingness to be merciful to those who truly seek Him is emphasized in 5.14-15. The gospel rests on this fact.

It is in the final chapter that a future hope is shown. However, note that this hope occurs only after the Lord brings judgment on "the sinners of My people" (9.10). As defined in Amos these sinners would have been the powerful and wealthy who had ignored the weak and poor of Israel. But the poor and weak who relied on the Lord would constitute the remnant who could look forward to a Kingdom typified by righteousness and justice (9.11-15). And it is such people, such "losers", who long for His Kingdom (Matthew 5.3-12; 1Corinthians 1.26-31).