

Tuesday Evening Bible Study
Series #8: The Minor Prophets
Session #7: Amos, Chapters 3-6
Tuesday, February 21, 2017

Outline of Amos

- A. Superscription (1:1)
- B. A speech against the nations & peoples (1:2 – 2:16)
- C. Oracles against Israel (Chapters 3-6)
- D. Amos' visions (Chapters 7-9)

Summary of Chapters 3-6

These chapters contain the indictment of Israel itself for sin and injustice. In Chapter 3, the prophet reminds the people that they have greater responsibility because God has chosen them. In Chapter 4, the prophet rails against Israel's luxurious excesses and vain piety. This is epitomized in his satirical description of upper-class women as "cows of Bashan," characterized as consuming resources. The horror and finality of Israel's deserved punishment are portrayed in Chapters 5-6. Amos notes that insensitivity in the face of human suffering is a betrayal of the covenant between God and his people. Amos's rhetoric makes clear that God is more interested in social justice than in religious ceremonies. The pomp and circumstance of religious ritual are no substitute for an authentic covenant relationship.

Notes

- A. Oracles against Israel (Chapters 3-6)
 - 1. Chosen people are held to a higher standard (3:1-2)
 - Because the people of Israel are God's chosen, having been saved from Egypt, they are held accountable for their actions.
 - 2. A series of rhetorical questions (3:3-8)
 - The implication here is that it is God who causes someone to prophesy and does not act without first confiding in the prophets.
 - 3. Oracles concerning Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (3:9-15)
 - 4. Israel's luxurious excesses (4:1-3)
 - Bashan was a region in northern Transjordan known for its sleek cattle (Deuteronomy 32:14; Psalm 22:12)
 - 5. Israel's piety is satirized (4:4-5)
 - 6. Israel's ignoring of divine warnings (4:6-13)
 - Because Israel did not return to God even after a series of disasters, they must meet God directly.
 - 7. Lament for Israel (5:1-3)
 - 8. A plea for repentance (5:4-7)
 - 9. A doxology (5:8-9)
 - 10. Amos condemns a corrupt legal system (5:10-17)
 - "Remnant of Joseph" = what's left of the Northern Kingdom
 - 11. Series of "woe" sayings (5:18 – 6:14)

- i. The day of the Lord (5:18-20)
- ii. Justice & righteousness, not festivals and sacrifices (5:21-27)
- iii. Indictments of Israel's self-indulgence (6:1-7)
 - Calneh and Hamath were prosperous cities of Syria, conquered by the Assyrians in 738 BC.
 - The allusion to Gath, the only Philistine city not mentioned in Amos 1:6-8, could refer to its defeat at the hands of Syria (2 Kings 12:18) or Judah (2 Chronicles 26:6) or its conquest by Assyria in 711 BC.
 - "revelry" refers to a social and funerary ritual banquet of Canaanite origin.
- iv. Judgement on Israel (6:8-14)
 - "burns the dead" – may refer to a practice used to prevent the spread of infectious disease.
 - Lo-debar and Karnaim are cities east of the Jordan recovered for Israel by Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25). The names of the cities mean "no-thing" and "horns" (strength)
 - "from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi Arabah" = the farthest limits of Israelite territory (2 Kings 14:25), from the Orontes Valley in Lebanon to the north, to the Rift Valley in the Southeast.

Resources

Notes from The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NRSV), 2010

Notes from HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV), 1989

Notes from The CEB Women's Bible, 2016