



Enter the Story

Amos

A narrative about how arrogant God's people can be and how God cannot be ignored.

THE BIBLE

Amos 1-9

Prepare for the Story

ICEBREAKER

Share about a time when you did something that no one expected you to do. What happened, and how did people react to you doing something so unexpected?

Rewind the Story

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- Divided Kingdom – Israel (North) & Judah (South)
- Elijah – Ahab, Jezebel, and the contest on Mt. Carmel
- Passing the Torch – Elisha's Ministry
- Jonah – A big fish story

Hear the Story

Scene One: Just a Farmer from Judah

Amos lived a simple life before God spoke to him. He was just a farmer watching over his fig tree grove and tending to his sheep. At first glance, he didn't look like much, but all that changed when God told Amos to take a message to the people of Israel.

Amos was from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, but God sent him to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. At the time, Israel was experiencing an economic boom ... things were going so well that some would have called it a golden age. The people lived in large houses and had more money than they knew what to do with. Because things were so good, they figured God must be pleased with them.

But the message God wanted to deliver wasn't one the people wanted to hear.

Scene Two: A Message About Israel's Neighbors

Amos didn't wait long to deliver the vision God shared with him when he arrived in Israel. It was a message designed to soften the people's hearts so they could hear what God wanted to tell them.

He began by telling them how angry God was with their neighbors, the pagan nations surrounding them.

- The sin of **Damascus** was treating people as things to be used for personal advantage. (1:3-5)
- The sin of **Gaza** was valuing financial gain for themselves over the well-being of others. (1:6-8)
- The sin of **Tyre** was their eagerness to break their vows and promises to ensure the desired outcomes. (1:9-10)
- The sin of **Edom** was fueling hatred against people who had hurt them. (1:11-12)
- The sin of **Ammon** was justifying harming others for their own personal satisfaction. (1:13-15)
- The sin of **Moab** was assuming that vengeance was their personal right. (2:1-3)
- The sin of **Judah** was ignoring God's commands and living however they pleased. (2:4-5)

In prophesying about the nations around Israel, Amos practically drew a circle right around them on the map. Naming Israel's rivals and pointing out their failures one by one allowed Amos to gain some favor with his audience. Naturally, being from Judah, they were skeptical of his message, but hearing him rail against their enemies, made them want to listen to what he had to say.

He even spoke out against his own people, the Kingdom of Judah. They never expected a prophet to come from Judah and pronounce judgment on his own homeland. All of this seemed to confirm what they thought, God was pleased with them ... and if what Amos was saying was correct ... they were the only ones God was pleased with.

Scene Three: A Message Against Israel

If Amos had stopped his message there, the people of Israel would have been thrilled, but it turned out that what they heard Amos say about everyone else was just an appetizer for what God had to say to them.

The real message was that God was angry with them and disappointed with how they were living. The gap between the rich and the poor was growing. Wealthy people were leveraging the system to keep the disadvantaged in oppression. God had blessed the people, but they were using His blessings to indulge themselves instead of becoming a blessing to others. The people only gave lip service to God while they ignored His commands, lived their own way, and worshipped other gods.

So Amos delivered the message God gave him for the people of Israel, saying. *"Because of the great sins of Israel, I'm not putting up with them any longer ... before today, I was always on your side. I destroyed the Amorites when they confronted you. They looked like mighty oaks before you, but branches to roots, I cleared them out of your way I'm the One who delivered you from Egypt and led you safely through the wilderness for forty years ... I raised up your children to be prophets and set aside your best and brightest to be trained in my ways ... but you told them to quit following me. You led them away from me ... I've had enough ... I'm at my breaking point. When will you see how serious this is?"*

When I take action against you, what will you do? Where will you turn? You won't be able to run fast enough ... your best and most skilled warriors stand no chance against me. You won't make it. What are you going to do?"

Out of all the families on earth, I chose you. You hold a special place to me, and because of that, you also bear a special responsibility. Do you think you are different from all of the surrounding nations? Do you think you will get a special exemption for your behavior?

Look around you; look at Assyria; look at Egypt. Didn't they get what was coming to them? Won't it be the same for you? Trust what I'm telling you ... when this is over, there won't be much left of you ... on the day I make Israel pay for its sins ... I will tear down your winter palaces and your summer homes ... all your fancy buildings, all of your precious luxuries will be scattered around.

The city that marches out with a thousand will end up with a hundred ... the town that marches out with a hundred will end up with ten. Don't be foolish; seek Me and live. Don't waste your time on these other so-called gods; seek me, the One True God, and live. If you keep going the way you're headed, all you will have will be a pile of ashes because I will send a consuming fire that no one will be able to put out."

Scene Four: One Final Chance

Then Amos shared that he had a vision, and in this vision, he saw God standing beside a wall, and in his hand was a plumb line, a tool to determine if something is upright. And God explained what the vision meant, saying, *"Look what I've done. I've hung a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel. I've spared them for the last time. The false shrines will be smashed, I'm going to knock them to pieces, and I'm raising my sword against the royal family of Jeroboam,"*

Upon hearing the message that Amos was spreading, Amaziah, the priest at the shrine at Bethel, sent a message to Jeroboam, king of Israel, saying, *"Amos is plotting to get rid of you, and he's doing it as an insider, he's here in Israel trying to stir the people up against you. He's saying that you are going to be killed and that the nation is headed toward exile. If this gains momentum, it will destroy the country. We've got to silence him."*

Then Amaziah confronted Amos, *"Get out of here, you so-called seer! Go back to Judah, where you come from. Do your preaching there – don't ever show your face here again. This is the king's chapel. His royal shrine and you aren't welcome here any longer."*

But Amos stood up to Amaziah, *“I never planned on becoming a preacher. I raised my livestock, and I pruned my trees. Then God took me off the farm and said, “Go preach to my people in Israel.”*

So I did what He instructed, and now I’m here to tell you, “Listen to what the Lord has to say to you, a priest of this alleged shrine; here’s what’s coming for you: your wife will become a prostitute in the town, and your children will fall by the sword. Your land will be auctioned off, and in the end, you will die homeless and friendless ... while you watch Israel be hauled off to exile ... far, far away from this place you call home.”

The message God was sending through Amos was clear. He wasn’t measuring Israel against the nations around them; he was measuring them with His own plumb line: the Law that He had given them. Compared to other nations, they might be able to say, “We’re not so bad.” But compared to God’s law, it was easy to see just how crooked they had become. And while they wanted God to punish the nations around them, God promised to deal with them first.

Amos' message was a warning; they still had a chance to respond and change their ways. But Amos never received any positive response. Like his interaction with the priest at Bethel, his warnings were ignored.

Scene Five: God’s Promise to Israel

Judgement Day was coming for Israel, that message was true, but it wasn’t Amos’ only message. Before he went back home and recorded what God had revealed to him, Amos also shared with the people the promise that God had for them:

“After the Day of Judgement, I will restore David’s house that has fallen to pieces. I’ll repair the holes in the roof and replace the broken windows. I will fix it up and make it like new. David’s people will be strong again ... I will make everything right again for my people in my timing. One day they will rebuild their ruined cities. One day they will plant vineyards so they can drink sweet wine. One day they will work their gardens and eat delicious produce ... and on that day, I will plant them back in their homeland ... back to the promised land ... and they will never be uprooted from it again.”

Retell the Story

- Who was Amos, and what did God ask him to do?
- What was the state of the people of Israel when Amos was sent to them?
- Who did Amos first preach against?
- How did Amos' message gain the trust of the Israelites?
- What message did God have for the people of Israel?
- How did the King of Israel and his priest at Bethel respond to Amos' message?
- How did the people respond to Amos' message?
- What was God's final promise to the people through Amos?

Discuss the Story

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?
- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?
- Why do you think the people of Israel took their blessings for granted?
- Why do you think the Israelites compared themselves to other nations to determine their own righteousness?
- Why do you think God gave His people the Laws as a "plumb line"?
- Why do you think the people in the story were so quick to take advantage of those who were less fortunate than themselves?

- What do you make of King Jeroboam and the Priest Amaziah's attempt to silence Amos?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of **other** stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?
- What do you notice from this story about God's character or qualities?

Join the Story

1) THE COMPARISON GAME

One of the main concepts in the book of Amos is that the Israelites felt superior to their neighbors. They felt this way because of their successes but also because of the failures of those around them. Why do you think we find so much comfort or anguish in comparing ourselves to others? Why is it that when we want to feel better about ourselves, we put others down? And why do we experience jealousy and insecurity when we look at how good others have it? Read Galatians 6:4-5. What can we learn from what Paul has to say about comparison here?

2) THE PEOPLE GOD LOVES

As far as the people of Israel were concerned, they were God's people. But after hearing Amos' message, one thing was clear. God's people were the least and the lost, the hurting and the oppressed, the weak and the broken. In the book of Amos, we see that God stands up most vigorously for the people who cannot stand up for themselves. How should this inform how we live? Who are the people in our world who we should put before ourselves? What's one thing our group could do to start people the least and the lost before ourselves?

3) PUNISHMENT AND PROMISE

The overwhelming message of Amos is that if the people of Israel won't change their ways, then punishment was coming. Sadly, they didn't hear the message, and nothing changed. But the message of punishment wasn't the only thing God shared with them. He also gave them a promise. How does God's promise of future restoration make you feel? Knowing that one day God will redeem, restore, and rebuild His whole world ... how does that truth inform how we should live?

Pray

God,

You have spoken Your truth through Your servants, the prophets; through them, You called and inspired Your people to be concerned about the things that break Your heart. Your compassion for the poor, the orphans, the widows, the destitute, and the oppressed is not a secret. Please help us to see what you see and to be Your hands and feet in Your world. Help us meet the needs of all Your people and see the opportunities that You are placing before us every day. Amen.