



The Prophets Study 1: **Amos - Prophet of Justice**

Background

The book of Amos appears to have been written in about 750 BC, probably during the reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah. He was from Tekoa (1:1) a small town about 6 miles south of Bethlehem and 11 miles from Jerusalem. Amos describes himself as a shepherd (1:1), but he also describes himself as a dresser of sycamore (fig) trees (7:14). However, his skill with words, his range of general knowledge and insight into the current political situation and the way in which his ministry unfolds is a wonderful example of how through God we may have treasure in a jar of clay (2 Corinthians 4: 7).

The main part of Amos's ministry was probably carried out c760-750 BC. Both Israel and Judah were enjoying great prosperity and had reached new political and military heights (2 Kings 14:23-15:7; 2 Chronicles 26). About 40 years earlier, at the end of his ministry, Elisha had prophesied the resurgence of Israel's power (2 Kings 13:17-19), and more recently Jonah had prophesied her restoration to a glory not know since the days of Solomon (2 Kings 14:25). Israel at this time was politically secure and spiritually smug, enjoying peace and prosperity and falling into complacency.

The Message

Read Amos 1 - 2:8

1. How many times do the words "This is what the Lord says" or "Thus says the Lord" appear?
2. Why do you think Amos is careful to preface his pronouncements in this way?
3. List the crimes of Israel's neighbours that have so greatly angered God? (1:3-2:3).
4. By what standards does it appear that God is judging His own people - Israel and Judah (2:4-8).
5. How are these different from those by which the other nations are judged?

Read Amos 5:1

1. What specific promises does God give to Israel?
2. What are the consequences if Israel does not turn back to God?



3. What attitudes do we see today that are at odds with God's mercy and justice?
4. What does verse 5:24 reveal?

Read Amos 7:10 - 17

1. Amos is accused of "raising a conspiracy" (verse 10). Why would his judgments seem subversive?
2. How does Amos respond when he is reprimanded by the priest? What makes him so bold?

The book of Amos is primarily about God's righteousness and justice in bringing Israel into an awareness of accountability before God and warns of impending judgment if Israel does not mend its ways. However, Amos finishes on a note of hope. Amos 9:11 - 15 deals with restoration after judgment. Verses 13 - 15 give a picture that reminds us of Eden and a second exodus, a picture of right worship and a right doctrine of God.

We know that because the people refused to heed the prophecies that Amos brought within 30 years they had been brought to fulfillment in the destruction of the north. 586 BC saw the fall of Jerusalem.

Meditation

Spend some time in prayer for justice issues in our community and nation. Reflect on whether there are areas in your life in which you have become complacent. Are there areas in your life where other issues have taken priority of over God in your life?