



2

God Warns Israel

Key Theme

- God judges sin.

Key Passages

- Amos 2:6–12, 3:1–2, 3:9–11, 4:10–12, 5:4–7

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe God’s message to Israel through Amos.
- Identify the attribute of God that demands judgment.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

page 4

Write on the board, “God is . . .”

Students will work on the Memory Verse Review Sheet.

- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



Studying God’s Word

page 4

The Lord sent the prophet Amos to the northern kingdom of Israel to deliver a message of judgment. Through Amos, the Lord warned Israel to turn to Him or He would send an adversary to destroy them. God showed His patience with Israel, but He must judge sin.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Read through Amos
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: God Is . . .

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Students will stop to consider how many people tend to focus on God’s love above His other attributes using a script of a witnessing encounter. God is also a just judge and people need to understand this part of His character to fully understand God (and the gospel).

- Student Guides
- Print three copies of the God Is . . . Script.
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

In the opening verse of the book that bears his name, Amos is identified as a shepherd from Tekoa, a small town about nine miles south of Jerusalem. Amos was a simple man, caring for sheep and growing sycamore figs (7:14), and God used this humble man to communicate a message of pending judgment to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Amos was one of many prophets sent by God who were rejected by the people of Israel.

As a prophet, Amos delivered his message as straight from God. Throughout the book, Amos recorded exactly as God directed. The phrase “says the Lord” appears in this small book over 40 times! There is no doubt here that God was the source of the message—as He was the source, through the Holy Spirit, of the writing of all Scripture.

Amos was faithful to deliver the message from God, which not only warned of coming judgment because of Israel’s sin and disobedience (Amos 2:13–16), but also offered forgiveness and grace to the people if they would repent (Amos 5:4, 5:6, 5:14–15). God would finally punish their sinfulness, but He gave Israel decades to repent—revealing His patience.

Ultimately, Amos’s message was rejected—even by Amaziah, the priest who accused Amos of conspiring against the king. The priest reported Amos to the king and told the prophet to flee to the land of Judah and never again prophesy in Israel (Amos 7:10–13). God warned that an army would come against Israel. An adversary would be all around the land, sap their strength, and plunder the palaces (Amos 3:11). Israel did not listen, and this judgment came upon them

when the Assyrians captured and deported the people of Israel in 721 BC (2 Kings 17:5–6).

The Old Testament prophets are divided into two groups—major prophets and minor prophets. Amos is considered one of the minor prophets, but that certainly doesn’t mean that he was less important or that his message was less significant than any of the other prophets. The classification of “minor” primarily refers to the length of the book in our Bibles.

The books of the minor prophets do NOT appear in chronological order in the Bible. For example, Amos was prophesying long before Ezra and Nehemiah, whose lives are recorded in the Bible before the book of Amos. Likewise, Isaiah prophesied after Amos, yet his writings appear in the canon before the book of Amos. This is something to be aware of as you pursue Bible study. The books of the Bible are not arranged chronologically, but are arranged by sections. Knowing this will help you to discern, through careful observation of all of Scripture, what the historical context is—not only of the major and minor prophets but of all biblical history as well.

The prophets of the Old Testament had many roles. Amos fulfilled two of those roles by delivering messages of judgment to God’s people and to foreign nations—both Israel and the Gentiles. Chapter 1 confirms this when we read that Amos delivered the message of God’s wrath against the Gentile nations of Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab. Then, using the same language, he focused on Judah and then at length on Israel. God spoke with the same certainty against the Gentile nations as He did against His own chosen people. The Bible tells us that “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psalm 7:11). But though God’s justice knows no partiality, He had mercy on those who turned to Him in repentance and faith. And

He is still willing to freely pardon all those who repent and place their trust in the Messiah—Jesus Christ (Acts 10:34–38).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

The introduction to the book sets Amos during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II in Israel. Interestingly, Amos mentioned that his message was delivered two years before the earthquake. Throughout Scripture we find that earthquakes often accompanied God's judgment. So what earthquake was Amos referring to? Apparently, he assumed the readers would know which earthquake he was talking about. As we compare Scripture with Scripture, rightly dividing the Word of truth, we find a similar reference in Zechariah 14:5. And, though not specifically recorded in Scripture, the Jewish historian Josephus reported an earthquake accompanying God's judgment on Uzziah when he offered incense to God in the Temple. We read in 2 Chronicles 26:16–22 how Uzziah had sinned against God by entering the Temple to perform a duty assigned to the priests.

As we read and study Scripture, we need to keep in mind that, although historical information is great confirmation of what the Scriptures tell us, the records of men like Josephus are not inspired by God. Josephus was a reputable historian, and it is a reasonable possibility that the earthquake occurred when God struck Uzziah with leprosy and was the same earthquake mentioned by Amos.

As God surely promised in Amos 3:11, Israel did eventually fall to an adversary. That adversary was the nation of Assyria, who under the leadership of Shalmaneser V besieged Israel's capital city of Samaria

(2 Kings 17:1–8). God's patience with the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom had ended, and His justice was enacted through the destruction of their capital and the deportation of the people. Ten of the twelve tribes were now scattered among the nations. Now only two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) remained to the south in the nation of Judah. But it would not be long until Jerusalem and Judah would suffer the same fate as the nation to her north.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord Jesus, I'm so blessed to be your called, chosen, and adopted child. In this lesson, I was saddened to read about how your chosen people, Israel, hardened their hearts against you. They did not embrace truth when your prophet spoke your message plainly. Thank you that when you judged your people, you kept your promise by preserving a remnant, so that I could be redeemed. I know that it is only by your grace that my heart is sensitive to your Word. Please keep me close, so that every time your Word delivers a message of correction to me, I will listen and return to you in humility. Help me clearly present your plan of salvation to my students this week. Please use this lesson to draw them to you as they consider your justice and your love.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





COME ON IN

- Write on the board, “God is . . .”
- Students are to work on Memory Verse Review Sheets.



Review

Last week we looked at the history of the two kingdoms: Israel and Judah. We saw from Scripture that the northern kingdom of Israel had 19 kings who were all wicked. The southern kingdom of Judah had 20 kings—some were good, but most were bad. God had called them to be a light to the nations but they failed miserably, turning from the God who had brought

them into the Promised Land to worship the idols of the pagan nations. Their rebellion against God was not overlooked by God, but neither did He judge them immediately.

The next three lessons will be focused on Israel and then we will shift to the south and talk about Judah.



- Write on the board, “God is . . .”



Studying God’s Word

READ THE WORD

Turn with me to the book of Amos. If you are not sure where that is, you will find it in the Minor Prophets section. If you can find Daniel, go three more books to the right. Amos was a prophet from Judah who proclaimed messages to both Israel and Judah. We are going to focus on his proclamations to Israel today, so we will be skipping through the chapters a bit. Let’s read Amos 2:6–12, 3:1–2, and 3:9–11 together. *Assign someone to read as you mention each passage. Ask them to recite the reference as they begin reading so everyone can follow along.*

Amos 2:6–12, 3:1–2,
3:9–11

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God’s Word by asking the right questions.

- ? **What is the overall tone or theme of what we just read?** *The theme is judgment, and reading the rest of the passages would only enhance that theme.*
- ? **What literary style is what we just read in Amos?** *The passages are very poetic, with many couplets.*

- ? Looking at 2:6, there is a device used in the language that you might be unfamiliar with. What is meant by using the numbers three and four? *The intent is to show the certainty of what is stated. A similar phrase in English is, "If I have told you once, I have told you a thousand times." The intent is to say that something is certain.*
- ? What other poetic device do you notice in 2:6? *There is a couplet that is used to show how evil the people have become to sell people for gain.*
- ? How does verse 2:6 begin? *"Thus says the Lord."*
- ? Scan through the first two chapters and look for that phrase. Why is it repeated so many times? *The phrase is found in 1:3, 1:6, 1:9, 1:11, 1:13, 1:15, 2:1, 2:4, 2:6, 2:11, and 2:16. It is repeated to emphasize that these are the sure words of the Lord and should not be ignored—punishment is coming.*
- ? What are some of the sins of Israel listed in 2:6–8? *Defrauding people, stealing land, corrupting others, sexual sins, idolatry, etc.*
- ? What change happens at verse 9? *God starts to remind the people what He had done for them in the past.*
- ? Looking at 3:1–2, what idea is repeated? *God had delivered them, but now He is going to punish them.*
- ? In 3:9, why are the surrounding nations called to look at Samaria? *Samaria was the capital of Israel, so it is used as a synonym for the whole country. The nations were called to watch how God would punish them even though they were His chosen nation.*
- ? What event is foreshadowed in 3:11? *The land would be surrounded by an enemy and the palace would be plundered. This foreshadows the eventual fall of the kingdom at the hands of the Assyrians.*
- ? When did Amos make these proclamations? *We must look back to 1:1 to see that this happened in the days of Uzziah King of Judah and Jeroboam II King of Israel. That places the date around 800 BC. Refer to the History of Israel timeline poster. This also places Amos at the same time as Jonah.*

➤ Amos was a contemporary of Jonah.

Discover the Truth

God hates sin. His beloved nation was rebelling against Him so He sent a warning. As we have already seen, one of the major roles of prophets was to call out the sin of the people. Amos had come with a message of judgment. It was not a message from himself, but a message from the Lord. God knew all of the sins of the nation as well as each individual sin.

- ? What attributes of God are demonstrated in God's judgment of sin? *He is holy—He hates sin. He is just—He must punish sin.*

The people had sinned against their God and His just judgment was about to be exercised. In Amos 4:2, God says, "The Lord God has sworn by His holiness . . ." and explains that judgment is coming to Israel. Because God is holy, He must judge sin in a just manner. God's justice and holiness demand that sin be punished.



➤ Refer to the Roles of the Prophets Poster.

HOLY

JUST

READ THE WORD

Let's continue looking at Amos's message in Amos 4:10–12 and 5:4–7. *Have someone read the passages aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD**Observe the Text**

- ? What phrase is repeated in 4:10 and 11? *You have not returned to me.*
- ? What would have caused them to return? *God had sent plagues and other trials to persuade the people to turn back to God, but they refused.*
- ? What was God's call to the Israelites? *He called them to repent, to seek Him and live.*
- ? What attributes of God are demonstrated in this call to repentance?
Merciful—He withholds deserved punishment. Patient—He allows people time to respond and holds back His judgment.
- ? Would God have relented from destroying Israel if they had repented?
Surely. When Nineveh turned from its wickedness at the preaching of Jonah, God turned back from destroying them as He had promised to do. The judgment was conditional, so God could relent without violating His promise.

MERCIFUL

PATIENT

Discover the Truth

Just as God is holy and just, He is also merciful and patient. God was willing to send Amos to call the people to repent. This was not the first prophet to call them to repentance. Elijah had already come. Elisha had already come. God was patient.

Knowing that the Assyrians finally took Israel captive in 721, there were at least 50 years between Amos's call to repentance and the final destruction God brought to Israel.





God Is . . .

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils
- Three copies of the God Is . . . Script

INSTRUCTIONS

You will have three students read a script to demonstrate the skewed view of God's character held by many people.

There is much confusion in our culture about God's attributes. As you interact with people, you will have the opportunity, as an ambassador of Christ, to correct some of those misunderstandings.

- ? When I say, "God is . . .," what comes to mind? *Accept various responses.*
- ? If we were to go to the mall (or local attraction) and ask that question to 100 people, what do you think the most common response would be? *Most will respond with "God is love" as the answer.*

I need three volunteers to read a script for me: two guys and one girl. The scene is a

local park where Greg (*assign a reader*) is out fishing . . . for men. Tom (*assign a reader*) and Sally (*assign a reader*) are a teenage brother and sister sitting at a picnic table in the park. *Have the three volunteers read the script.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

- ? What factors in our culture are responsible for communicating the idea that God is loving and would not judge people? *Many media sources promote this message. Many people who claim to be Christians also spread this false message. This idea is even present in entertainment from Disney and Hallmark at all age levels. Beyond those, TV talk shows with self-help experts (Oprah, Dr. Phil, etc.) promote the same ideas and wrap them in Christian lingo to make them appeal to Christians.*

It is important for us to bring truth to a world that is confused by error—often masquerading as religious truth. We go to be ambassadors of God and deliver the message of repentance and hope just as Amos did.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

The warning brought to the Israelites by Amos was a sure sign of God's mercy toward them. The call to repent was directly from God through the mouth of Amos. But that call was rejected and there was no repentance from the king, the priests, or the people. Of course there was a remnant of people who were truly following God, but the majority did not.

They did not believe that God would judge them just as many people today do not believe that God will judge them. It is important that we keep the fullness of God's character in our minds as we consider His actions in this world. God has revealed that He is merciful and loving,

but He has also revealed that He is just and holy. In His justice, God must punish sin. He hates sin because it is an affront to His holiness.

Each of us has sinned against God. We have failed to obey Him perfectly and we deserve His just judgment. We deserve the punishment of hell. “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Ephesians 2:4–5).

God’s justice was satisfied as Jesus bore the wrath of the Father upon the Cross. He bore our sins even though He had not earned any of the punishment that we deserve. The sinless Son of God was put to death for us. Not only did He bear our sin, but we can now be seen as righteous because He lived a sinless life on our behalf (2 Corinthians 5:20–21).

God’s justice demands a punishment for sin, and Jesus Christ has paid that penalty for all who repent and trust in His work on the Cross. That is the good news of the gospel that we must always keep in front of us. That is the gospel that we have the joy of presenting to those who are under God’s wrath. We can joyfully sing the refrain, “Hallelujah, what a Savior!”

GOD’S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ?** **What parallels do you see in the book of Amos and our culture today?** *Discuss various answers including: people are sinful, the government is not seeking to follow God, there are corrupt religious leaders, God has brought hardships on the society but the people do not repent, God is still sending messengers to call for repentance, etc.*
- ?** **In what ways are we called to act like Amos in our culture?** *Just like Amos was to proclaim God’s call of repentance, we have the revealed words of God which we can proclaim. We are not prophets in the exact sense that Amos was, but we are still called to herald the gospel and rely on the Word of God to understand truth.*

- ? Are there any areas in which you think you have been influenced by the “God is love” movement? *Discuss various answers.*
- ? What hope do you have in overcoming false ideas about God that you may believe or have believed? *Using the Scriptures and relying on the Holy Spirit, we can come to understand God’s true nature.*
- ? Knowing that judgment is certain for every sinner, why is understanding the gospel and who Jesus is so important? *Jesus is the only hope for the salvation of sinners from God’s wrath. We have all earned and deserve punishment for our sins. Knowing that, we should offer great praise to God and know that He is just but also loving. God loved us enough to send His Son to die on our behalf, so we know the depth of His love (1 John 4:10).*
- ? God was patient with the Israelites and gave them, as a nation, hundreds of years to repent and turn back to Him before He destroyed them. How have you seen God’s patience in judgment in your life or others who are close to you? *Many people have rebelled against God, whether living in the church culture or outside of it (or both), and God has been patient, calling them to repentance and faith even at advanced ages.*



MEMORY VERSE

Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor my praise to carved images.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for demonstrating His love and justice in sending Christ to die for sin.
- Praise God for His perfect and holy character.
- Ask God for wisdom in communicating His justice and love.

