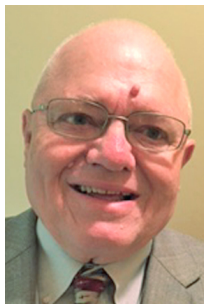


Explore the Bible: September 4

Listen to God • Amos 2:4-16

By Don Hicks



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One thing he wants to clear up early in this study is that these books are included in the 12 Minor Prophets only because they are shorter than the Major Prophets. These Bible books were preserved for us by the Holy Spirit because of their important messages.

Pouncey closes his introductory page writing, "The minor

prophets carried a major message, that God had a plan for His people that even their sin couldn't thwart. Judgment would come, but so would a Messiah who would deliver them from their sin."

Amos' home town of Tekoa was a village 11 miles south of Jerusalem and 18 miles west of the Dead Sea. Our pupil's book says, "The land there is barren and useful only for herding of sheep."

G. Dwayne McCrary, the LifeWay team leader for the editing group there says, "Amos was a shepherd who understood the need for sheep to obediently follow the Shepherd."

In the New Testament, Jesus tells us He is the Good Shepherd whose sheep are willing follow His voice. The Shepherd's Song in Psalm 23 reminds of the shepherd meeting all his sheep's needs so abundantly that we can say with confidence, 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.'"

McCrary also says, "In Amos, Jonah, Hosea, and Micah, we find four ordinary men whom God used in extraordinary ways." Amos lived and prophesied in the eighth century B.C. H.I. Hester, in his classic Old Testament textbook *The Heart of Hebrew History*, tells us, "Amos, the uncompromising prophet of righteousness, lived in the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel, about 760 B.C.

Amos used the following formula over and over: "This is what the LORD says: 'For three sins of Damascus; even for four, I will not turn back my wrath'" (Amos 1:3 NIV).

The sin for which God was showing wrath to Damascus in verse three is, "Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth" (Amos 1:3 NIV). Verse six tells us, "This is what the Lord says. 'For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath'" (Amos 1:6 NIV).

Each time Amos tells them, "This is what the LORD says," he

moves closer to Judah and Israel.

In verse nine Amos writes: "For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she [Tyre] sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty brotherhood" Amos 1:9 (NIV).

Amos is moving still closer to his home (Judah) and on to Israel (the Northern Kingdom).

In Verse 11, God says He will not turn back his wrath from Edom, "Because he pursued his brother with a sword stifling all compassion" (Amos 1: 11 NIV). Turning to Ammon, God will not turn back his wrath, "Because he ripped open pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders" (Amos 1:13 NIV).

Now we look closer at our focal passage for today's lesson. In my NIV study Bible this section of Amos is titled, "Judgment on Israel." Amos 6:2 reads, "This is what the LORD says: 'For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals.'"

Basic human morality does not accept slavery and Amos emphasizes that as he comes to the heart of his ministry as a prophet of God.

Amos was called primarily to witness to Israel. He does not back down but fearlessly delivers the message God gave him for Israel. Besides expecting respect for basic human dignity, Amos reprimanded the Israelites for ignoring their duty to the Lord.

God said, "I also raised up prophets from your sons and Nazirites from among your young men" (Amos 2:11 NIV).

Amos strongly reprimands the Israelites for making the Nazirites drink wine and telling the prophets to be quiet and

not prophesy. As a result of these terrible sins, "The warrior will not save his life. The archer will not stand his ground.. Even the bravest warriors will flee naked" (Amos 14b-16 NIV).

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