

## **November Teaching Theme: Amos/Advent**

讲员 Speaker: Pastor William R. Horne / Pastor Linghui Peter Tian

题目 Topic: Hear this Word & Live / 给以色列和其领袖的信息

经文 Scripture: Amos (阿摩司書) 3-6

**Monthly Theme:** This month, we spend three weeks looking at one of the twelve minor prophets, Amos, before entering Advent season. Amos was a shepherd and fig-tree farmer who lived in Judah, near the border of Israel. Remember, back in 1 King 12, Israel had split into two different nation-states with different kings - Israel in the North and Judah in the South. About 150 years after this event, in the 8th Century BC, we find Amos, who God compels to confront Northern Kingdom's corruption and their unjust ruler Jeroboam II. Jeroboam II won many battles, took new territory, and generated a lot of wealth for Israel - but the prophets viewed him as one of the worst kings ever in Israel's history. His wealth led to religious apathy allowing idolatry to run wild, and it led him (like wealth and power often do) to perpetuate injustice. Finally, Amos had enough of the evil he was seeing and took up the prophetic role to speak the truth of God to power - thus, he takes the trip north to Bethel and begins his prophetic ministry. Pastor Mark Webe opened up the three-week series examining Amos 1-2: A Message to the Nations. This week we continued the series looking at the core of the book Amos 3-6, as God calls Israel to repent of their idolatry and unjust practices or face the consequences.

十一月 **November:** 先知書: 阿摩司書 **Prophetic Book: Amos**

November 7th – 阿摩司書 1-2: 致萬國與以色列的預示 Amos 1-2: A Message to the Nations

November 14th - 阿摩司書 3-6 致以色列與其領導的預示 Amos 3-6: Injustice and Idolatry

November 21st - 阿摩司書 7-9: 阿摩司的異象上帝對以色列的省判 Amos 7-9: Judgment & Hope

November 28th – 對將臨君王的盼望 Hope of the Coming King (將臨節 Advent)

### **Resources:**

[English Service Sermon Video](#) (Pastor William R. Horne)

[English Service Sermon Slides](#)

[Chinese Service Sermon Video](#) (Pastor Linghui Peter Tian)

[Chinese Service Sermon Slides](#)

[Bible Project: Amos](#) (English 7:12)

[Bibe Project: Amos](#) (Mandarin 7:31)

### **Discussion Questions** (Pastor William R. Horne / Pastor Linghui Peter Tian):

- (1) Read Amos 3:1-2, 4, 5:1-24 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage? (Leaders, I suggest sitting down and reading Amos 3-6 in one sitting)
- (2) 简述当时以色列人的信仰和社会生活，这对今天我们基督徒生活有哪些提醒? Briefly describe the beliefs and social life of the Israelis at that time. What reminders does this remind us of our Christian life today?
- (3) 透过经文中上帝审判的信息，显明上帝哪些属性? What attributes of God are revealed through the message of God's judgment in the scriptures?

- (4) Read Amos 4:4-5, 5:21-24. Amos mocks Israel's worship because their actions did not match their worship. Idolatry led to their oppression of the poor. What idols are we tempted to worship today that lead to injustice and a lack of love for our neighbor? What does true worship look like, according to this passage?
- (5) Re-read Amos 5:10-15. What was Israel guilty of? How should this shape a Christian to injustice in our world?
- (6) 对于当时的以色列人，上帝审判的真实目的是什么？现实生活中，你有没有被上帝管教的经验？如果有，你从中学到了什么？For the Israelis at that time, what was the true purpose of God's judgment? In real life, have you ever been disciplined by God? If so, what have you learned from it?

**Important Notes** (Pastor William R. Horne):

Notes on Q1: Israel had a great calling to be a "blessing and light to the nations," which came with great responsibility, thus significant consequences for failure. Three times in Amos 3-5, we hear this call to "Hear this word" (3:1, 4:1, 5:1) which is not merely a mandate to listen, but it carries a strong expectation of response. This is God's word to us, we can not simply hear, but we must respond.

We first see here Israel's identity as "the whole family [Yahweh] brought up out of Egypt." This is a crucial and often repeated identity marker for the people of God throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Israel was a people trapped in slavery and under oppression in Egypt. They were the poor and oppressed who experienced injustice - this is their origin story. Second, we recall Israel's identity in this line, "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth," echoing the call of Abram in Genesis 12. If you recall the story from Genesis 12, The LORD called Abram to leave his land and people to go to a distant unknown land. God chose Abram's family to use for a special purpose. [Read Genesis 12:2-3]. Abram would eventually become Abraham, the father to the 12 Tribes of Israel. "ALL the people of the earth" were to be blessed through Israel! As you see, the identity of "chosen" comes not only with "blessing" but a great responsibility to live into the calling. Thus, Israel must face judgment because of their not living into their identity.

Notes on Q3: The book of Amos reveals God's hate for evil and deep love for his creation and those who have been abused by the evil actions of others. In our current cultural moment, God's judgment is almost always seen negatively (understandable so). But, the people of God have historically looked at God's coming judgment as a positive event, as God will rid evil and injustice from the world. When you have experienced or witnessed true evil in the world, you will long for God to make it right. God's judgment is love for his creation and creatures. It is an announcement that evil does not have the last word. However, God's judgment shifts to a negative event for us if we are the unrepentant perpetrators of sin, evil, and injustice. Israel could no longer look forward to God's coming judgment because they were now those partnering with evil and hurting their fellow image-bearers.

Notes on Q4: If you again recall, 1 Kings 12, Jeroboam I built two temples in the Northern Kingdom to try and rival Solomon's temple in Judah. One was in Bethel and the other in Dan, and he placed a golden calf in each of these temples. From this point on, Israel continued

to accumulate more idols. Some of these idols included the god of sex (Asherah), the god of weather (Baal), and the god of war (Anat). And we should note that these idols were worshipped alongside Yahweh, not simply instead of Yahweh. This is what we call syncretism - the mixing of true and false together. Amos prophesied in a time of relative prosperity in Israel to a people who were satisfied with their approach to life. Israel at this time used religion to legitimize war and militarism, equating their war victories and financial prosperity with “divine blessing.” Things appeared to be going well.

It doesn't take much reflection to see the profound resemblance between ancient Israel's idolatry and our own. We may not have the golden statues and religious trinkets, but the same idols deceive us. We worship national and military power, wealth accumulation, sex and celebrity, and comfortable seasons in life - ALL alongside worshipping Jesus. We equate prosperity in these things as “divine blessing,” deceiving ourselves into passivity - blind to our evil and blind to our neighbors. We aren't too different from ancient Israel.

Amos says their worship was bogus and fake, and God hates their worship because it is disconnected from how they treat people. A real relationship with God will transform a person's relationships and social ethics. True Worship of the living God should always lead to a life of justice, righteousness, and love of neighbor. For Israel, this was not happening, and until they rejected their unjust socioeconomic practices, God would reject their attempts to worship him. Amos says true worship looks like a community that “let's justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (5:24). Justice and Righteousness must flow out from the community of God's people. We must not neglect the “weightier matters of the law,” as Jesus tells us in Matthew 23:23. “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former.”

Notes on Q5: Israel was guilty of what we call systemic sin. They had created and maintained systems that oppressed the poor, marginalized, and weak. In particular, Israel was guilty of unfair taxation of the poor, which led to unpayable debts allowing Israel's rich to sell the poor into debt slavery. This system of injustice was then maintained by corruption in the courts and not giving the poor fair legal representation. Again, it doesn't take much reflection to see the similarities in many justice systems today. (If you want some resources to think through current-day examples in the United States, please let Pastor Will know.) The Christian must both refuse to partake in unjust systems and advocate on behalf of the poor, marginalized, and bottom of society against unjust systems. Israel refused to repent of its systemic injustice and face judgment.