

Amos Chapter 3

Verses 1-8

God emphasizes His intimate relationship with Israel by the repeated mention of “family” and the word “known”.

It is because of His love for His chosen people that their sin must be judged (Prov. 3:12; Jer. 31:35-36; Heb. 12:6).

Amos 3:1 "Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,"

“The whole family”:

The primary recipient of these messages was Israel; Judah was not excluded.

This is speaking of all the twelve tribes of Israel that God brought to the Promised Land out of Egypt.

They were not thankful for the fact that God had brought them out of great darkness into His marvelous Light.

Because God had entrusted them with His law, and He had done that with no other nation, they were more responsible for their sins.

Notice, it is the Word of the LORD coming from the mouth of Amos that has spoken against them.

Amos 3:2 "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

“You only have I known”:

God’s sovereign choice of Israel did not exempt her from punishment for disobedience.

“Have I known”:

Hebrew yada’ should be understood in the sense of God’s setting Israel apart to bring her into covenant relationship with Himself.

It is used with similar meaning (in Psalms 1:6; 147:19-20; and Ezek. 20:5).

Those who enjoy a close relationship with God are not insulated from divine punishment; God expects His people to live by a higher standard.

Their sins may not seem as bad as those of the pagans, but in His sight, they may be worse, because His children should know better.

They had known God and yet, they had turned from Him to the worship of false gods.

The very first commandment that He had given them had forbidden this very thing.

God had accepted them as His wife during the wilderness wanderings.

Their unfaithfulness to Him has not been overlooked.

He still loves them, but He is just, and He must punish them for their sins.

The agreement God had made with them was; He would bless them as long as they were obedient to Him.

He also promised to curse them, if they turned from Him and did not obey His voice.

Verses 3-6

By way of rhetorical device, Amos shows the reality of God's righteous judgment on Israel: it will happen just as prophesied.

Amos 3:3 "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

(From verses 3-8), the LORD posed a series of questions to show that, as some things are certain in nature, surely nothing happens in Israel that is outside His sovereignty.

Certain actions have certain results!

The LORD had spoken a word, and therefore the prophet was to speak, and the people were to listen with trembling.

Instead, they tried to silence the prophet (2:12; 7:12-13).

In this Scripture Amos is saying, the message he brings is in total agreement with the wishes of God.

The answer to the question above of course is no, they would stumble and fall.

Amos 3:4 "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?"

He will not, unless he has it in his sight, or in his paws; he roars when he first sees it, whereby he terrifies the creature, that it cannot move till he comes up to it; and when he has got it in his paws, he roars over it, to invite others to partake with him.

Now prophecy from the LORD is compared to the roaring of a lion (Amos 1:2); and this is never in a way of judgment without a cause.

The sin of men, or of a nation, which makes them a prey to the wrath and fury of God.

"Will a young lion cry":

Or "give forth his voice".

"Out of his den":

If he has taken nothing?

That is, if the old lion has taken nothing and brought nothing unto him; which signifies the same as before.

Unless by the young lion is meant the prophets of the LORD, who never prophesy but when they have a commission from him, and a people are pointed out to them as the just prey of his wrath and vengeance.

The comparison here is that a lion, who is about to attack, roars.

The young lion cries out from the den because he does have the prey.

Amos is crying out like this lion.

Israel is like this prey.

They are helpless to get away from this threatening roar from God that comes through Amos.

Amos 3:5 "Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin [is] for him? shall [one] take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?"

When a bird, trying to fly upwards is made to fall upon the earth snare, it is a plain proof that the snare is there.

So Israel, now that thou are falling, infers that it is in the snare of the divine judgment that they are entangled.

“Shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing”:

The bird-catcher does not remove his snare off the ground till he has caught some prey; so God will not withdraw the Assyrians, etc., the instruments of punishment, until they have had the success against you which God gives them.

The foe corresponds to the "snare," suddenly springing from the ground and enclosing the bird.

The Hebrew is literally, "Shall the snare spring from the earth?"

Israel entangled in judgments, answers to the bird that was "taken."

A "gin" is a noose for catching animals.

The trap that all sinners set for themselves is sin.

These Israelites are no different.

They have worshipped false gods, now they are caught in a net of their own making.

Amos 3:6 "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done [it]?"

The people of Amos' time should have realized that the judgment they had already experienced was due to God's displeasure.

The trumpet being blown is a warning of impending danger.

Amos' message from God to these people is like the trumpet blowing.

It is warning of impending danger.

The trumpet blowing causes terror to rise in the hearts of the people.

The warning from Amos should do the same thing.

Amos 3:7 "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."

Judgment is coming, but the LORD graciously warned the nation in advance through His prophets (e.g., Noah, Genesis Chapter 6; Abraham, Genesis Chapter 18).

God did not keep His "secret" (His sovereign plan), of pending judgment to Himself.

He sent a prophet to denounce the people's sin and warn them so that they might repent.

Before God acts in judgment against His people, He tells the prophet what He is going to do.

The prophet tells the people so they will have time to repent, and not be punished.

God gives them every opportunity to repent and they do not.

Verses 8-12

Amos employs a sight he probably saw as a shepherd; the parts of a mutilated sheep which was killed by a lion, to describe Israel's coming destruction.

It will be complete; the Lord has spoken ("A lion has roared").

Amos 3:8 "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

Amos was compelled to "prophesy" what the "Lord God" had "spoken" (Jer. 20:9; Acts 3:8).

When the lion roars, it strikes terror in his prey.

God has spoken through the prophet.

It would be impossible for the prophet to withhold this message.

Amos 3:9 "Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof."

The heathen nations, such as the Philistines and Egyptians, were rhetorically summoned to witness God's judgment.

If they condemn Israel, how much more will a righteous God?

"Ashdod" is used figuratively of all of Philistia, who with "Egypt:" is summoned to "Samaria" to view the unrest and oppression within it.

The Philistines and the Egyptians were both to be witnesses to the happenings in Israel.

The Israelites had sought treaties with them.

God had called them Israel's lovers.

God was their only true help.

Even the heathen would have condemned some of the terrible things they had been doing.

God has turned His back on them.

God wants the heathen to see that He is just and punishes His own when they do evil.

Amos 3:10 "For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces."

Not merely have lost the perception of what is and what is not right, but are indifferent to such distinctions.

They know not and care not; the awful state of utter moral impotence, wherein not only the intellectual consciousness, but the impulses to action, are languid or even paralyzed.

A dead conscience!

Nothing is more condemnatory than this brief sentence.

The light within them is darkness.

“Who store”:

Literally, with indignation, "the storers".

“Who store up violence and robbery”:

They could not understand what was right, while they habitually did what was wrong.

They "stored up," as they deemed, the gains and fruits.

The robbery and injustice they saw not, because they turned away from seeing.

But what is "stored" up, is not what wastes away, but what abides.

Who doubts it?

Then, what they treasured, were not the perishing things of earth, but in truth, the sins themselves, as "a treasure of wrath against the Day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5).

They have turned against the righteous teachings of their God, and gone for false gods.

They have turned completely away from a life of justice and righteousness.

They are doing what is right in their own sight.

The office that goes with living in a palace is also one of great responsibility.

It seems justice has been forgotten, they are violent robbers.

They are even worse than the heathen who live around them.

Amos 3:11 "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; An adversary [there shall be] even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled."

“An adversary”:

The Assyrians who captured and deported Israel (in 722 B.C.).

Their adversary is really the LORD.

Their land will be desolate around them.

God has spoken judgment upon them.

God will send an army against them that will destroy the palaces and take all the goodly things home.

Amos 3:12 "Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus [in] a couch."

“Two legs, or a piece of an ear”:

A small and insignificant remnant will be salvaged from God’s judgment.

This remnant will be saved, not because they deserve it, but because of God’s future messianic plans for Israel, which cannot be allowed to be thwarted by the nation’s sin.

The LORD gives a vivid description of the small remnant left in Israel after the Assyrian invasion.

There will be only a very few saved in all of this.

That is what is intended by finding a leg or an ear left in the lion's mouth.

They will be carried away with none of their wealth.

This is speaking of the remnant of the twelve tribes being very small and scattered in the lands around them.

There are so many lost, that they are spoken of today by some as the 10 lost tribes of Israel.

They are scattered in other lands.

Amos 3:13 "Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts,"

“Hear ye, and testify” (as in verse 9), the heathen nations were once again called upon to witness and testify.

This is a call to hear and understand.

They must tell this in the house of Jacob.

The house of Jacob speaks of all 12 tribes of Israel.

This double announcement of this being from God is the fact of God's great power in the heavens and in the earth to execute judgment on whomever He will.

This is speaking of the self-existent Eternal One.

Amos 3:14 "That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Beth-el: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground."

“Beth-el”:

The principal place of idol worship in Israel (1 Kings 12:25-33).

People seeking asylum could grab the “horns” (or four corners), of an altar, assuring them of a just trial (Exodus 21:14; 1 Kings 1:50-51; 2:28).

The picture of detached horns warns Israel that they will find no asylum from God’s well-deserved judgment.

The horns of the altar were cut off, because that was where the blood had been applied.

God will not allow them to sacrifice the blood of the lamb on the altar again.

Judgment has come from God.

They had greatly angered God, when they brought a calf into His house to be worshipped.

This happened at Beth-el.

The idol worshippers and their idols are destroyed.

Amos 3:15 "And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD."

Kings would sometimes build both “summer” and “winter” palaces.

The rich people of Israel were living like kings at the expense of the oppressed.

They were so affluent, that the kings and princes had winter and summer homes.

They had pampered themselves to the extent, that they had put walls of ivory in these palaces.

God will destroy all of this finery; they have made to spoil themselves.

God said it and it will be done.

Amos Chapter 3 Questions

1. Who had God spoken against in verse 1?
2. Who had brought them out of Egypt?
3. Why were the Israelites more responsible for their sins?
4. They had known God, and yet, they had done what?
5. God had accepted them as His _____.
6. What agreement had God made with them?
7. Can two walk together, except they be agreed?
8. What is the comparison of the lion and its prey with what was happening to them?
9. What is a "gin"?
10. The trap that all sinners have set for themselves is _____.
11. What was the trumpet in the city blown for?
12. Amos' message from God to these people was like the _____.
13. What had God done, prior to sending judgment upon His people?
14. When the lion roars, it strikes _____ in its prey.
15. Who were to witness this action of God?

16. Why did God call them to be witnesses?
17. They had turned against the _____ teachings of their God.
18. They are doing what is right in their own _____.
19. Who is their true adversary?
20. Who will God send against them?
21. What is meant by verse 12?
22. What happens to the remnant?
23. What is verse 13 a call to do?
24. Where does God cut off the horns of the altar?
25. What terrible thing had they brought into worship in God's house?
26. Who is the God of hosts?