

• *Amos thought flow so far*

• *Section One - God's anger close to irreversible judgement*

• *Section Two Israel is close to extermination*

• *Many invitations – now a final warning*

• *Section Three Annihilation is so close – Amos sings a funeral song*

• *Only a turning to justice and integrity will halt the funeral*

• *Amos calls for a flowing river of righteousness*

• *The cause of everything – complacency and carelessness*

Let us try once again to follow the drift of Amos' thought. Amos 1:2–3:8 made the point that God's anger was getting close to the stage where God would not turn back from judgement. 'For three transgressions... and especially for four, I will not reverse my decision'. There were messages for the nations ^{☐1} and for Judah ^{☐2}, but Amos went on to show that God's judgement was equally hanging over Israel ^{☐3}. Amos 3:1–8 belongs with 1:2–2:16, since it presses firmly upon the reader what was said in chapters 1–2.

In a second major section Amos warns that Israel is about to be exterminated. The nation was full of violence ^{☐1}; its religion was powerless^{☐2}; its upper-class citizens were arrogant ^{☐3}; its pilgrimages were useless ^{☐4}.

Yet, says Amos, God had given them many invitations to return to the ways of righteousness. He had sent the disasters that were threatened in the law of God: famine ^{☐5}, drought ^{☐6}, damage to the crops ^{☐7}, plague and defeat ^{☐8}, destruction ^{☐9}. After many warnings God is now giving one last invitation ^{☐10}.

Then, because God's annihilating judgement is so close, Amos sings a funeral song over Israel. The sections of the poetry have an A-B-C-D-C-B-A structure.

- A. The death-song (5:1–3)
- B. Seeking God but not at the sanctuaries (5:4–5)
- C. You... turn justice into bitterness (5:6–7)
- D. He ... The God who makes changes (5:8–9)
- C. You... turn righteousness to bribery (5:10–13)
- B. Seeking God (5:14–15)
- A. The death-song (5:16–17)

If – and only if – Israel amends its ways and turns to justice and integrity, then God will call a halt to the funeral.

In another A-B-C-B-A structure Amos calls for a flowing river of righteousness.

- A Inescapable judgement in the day of Yahweh (5:18–20)
- B. Rejection of worship (5:21–23)
- C. Let justice roll (5:24)
- B. Rejection of idolatry (5:25–26)
- A. Inescapable exile (5:27)

Now Amos 6:1–14 brings the middle section to an end by coming back to the cause of everything: Israel's utter complacency and carelessness despite everything that God has done for them in their previous history. There are two small units of analysis in which Amos looks at their complacent pride ^{☐1} and their carelessness amidst many privileges ^{☐2}. Then there are two units of final announcement that the end is near. A calamitous punishment ^{☐3} is at hand. based upon the certain principle that

☐1 1:3–2:3
☐2 2:4–5
☐3 2:6–16

☐1 3:9–12
☐2 3:13–15
☐3 4:1–3
☐4 4:4–5
☐5 4:6
☐6 4:7–8
☐7 4:9
☐8 4:10
☐9 4:11
☐10 4:12–13

☐1 6:1–3
☐2 6:4–6
☐3 6:7–11
☐4 6:12–14

1. Israel's Complacent pride

- Jerusalem and Samaria – upper classes living in laziness and luxury

- Privileges turned to pride rather than responsibility

- Without obedience to God Israel and Judah had become no different from the nearby pagan nations

- Amos had already predicted judgement on Syria and Philistia

God cannot indefinitely ignore the sin of His people ^{Am}4.

1. **Complacent pride.** First of all Amos denounces the ease and complacency of Israel's life ^{Am}1.

^{Am}1 6:1

¹Woe to you who live in easy luxury in Zion, woe to those who feel secure in Samaria, the distinguished men of the foremost of the nations, to whom the house of Israel apply for help.'

The two cities, Zion or Jerusalem, and Samaria, were the capitals of Judah and northern Israel. In both countries the upper classes were living a life of laziness and luxury.

Behind the spiritual laziness was pride. They thought the two parts of Israel were '*the foremost of the nations*' and they were '*distinguished men*' within it. 'Ruling classes' are a fact of life in every country, but when such people turn their privileges into a matter of pride rather than responsibility, God's judgement hangs over them. But – says Amos – Israel is no better than other cities ^{Am}1. (Despite some expositors, there is nothing in the text that signals verse 2 is a quotation.)

^{Am}1 6:2

²'Go to Calneh and look, and go from there to Hamath the great. Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory better than yours?'

'These kingdoms' seems to refer to Israel and Judah. If religiously and morally Zion and Samaria are decadent, then they will face God's judgement like any other ancient city. Take away Israel's uniqueness as the receiver of a revelation from God – and they are no different from the nations nearby! When the leaders of Israel and Judah reject God's revelation, their lifestyle becomes like that of everyone else. Amos says: if you reject the law of Yahweh then you are identical to the pagan cities of Calneh (a north Syrian city, also spelt as Kullani), Hamath (a powerful city also in the north of Syria) and Gath (the well-known town in Philistia to the south). They too are complacent and lazy! They too are vulnerable to attack. Syria and Philistia have already been condemned by God through Amos's prophecies (1:3–5 condemning Aram or Syria; 1:6–8 condemning Philistia). What is so special about Israel and Judah – once you have taken away obedience to the law of Yahweh? The Israelites think they are 'the foremost of the nations', But Amos asks: are the pagan fortresses to the north and the south any better than Jerusalem and Samaria?

In understanding this verse it is necessary to remember that Amos has already said that Syria and Philistia are doomed to be judged by God. It had not happened yet (although Kullani and Hamath would be devastated a few decades later) but the judgement upon Syria and Philistia had already been announced. Now Amos asks: is there any reason to think Zion and Samaria are any better than these already- condemned countries? Their complacent pride will soon come to an end.

The people of Israel were rejecting Amos's predictions of judgement.

• Those who have subjected terror to others will face it themselves

³*'Do you put off the day of calamity?
But would you bring near a reign of violence?'*

They put off the evil day that Amos has predicted but bring in a reign of terror for the common people of the land ¹. Retribution will come sooner or later. Those who have subject others to a reign of terror will face a reign of terror themselves – sent by Yahweh!

¹ 6:3

2. Carelessness amidst privilege

2. **Carelessness amidst privilege.** Amos 6:4–6 pictures the self-indulgence of these upper classes.

• Luxury and indulgence

⁴*'Those who recline on beds of ivory
and sprawl on their couches,
and eat lambs from the flock,
and calves from the midst of the stall.
⁵They improvise to the sound of the harp,
and like David have composed songs for themselves.
⁶They drink wine from sacrificial bowls,
while they anoint themselves with the finest of oils.
Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.'*

¹ 6:4a

² 6:4b

³ 6:5

⁴ 6:6a

⁵ 6:6a

⁶ 6:6b

• An indolent lifestyle with total indifference to the nation's ruin

Amos spells out in fuller detail what this indolent lifestyle involved: lazy luxury ¹, delicious dinners ², marvellous music ³, abundant alcohol ⁴ or one could say 'basins of beer' ⁵ – but total indifference to the ruin of the nation ⁶.

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