

Amos 1-7 reviewed

• Amos 1:2 – 3:8
God – a roaring lion about to pounce

• Amos 3:9 – 6:14
Judgement close – the funeral song begins

• Amos 7:1 – 9:15
deals with the question of whether Israel's end is final and bring permanent annihilation

• Israel and its King reject God's word

• The structure of the section

In Amos 1:2–3:8 we saw God as a roaring lion, about to devour Israel and the surrounding nations. God had not quite finally acted but the lion was roaring and was about to pounce.

In Amos 3:9–6:14 the judgement was so close that Amos was already singing the funeral song. Chastening had proved entirely useless. Israel was receiving one last word from God. The situation was not totally closed since Amos was still telling people to seek God. God was portrayed as the Creator- God who could turn darkness into daylight.

Now in Amos 7:1–9:15, the questions are: will Israel receive God's message? Will 'the end' be finally pronounced. And is there any hope for Israel whatsoever?

In the structure of the Book of Amos, Amos 8:1–3 comes in as a reassertion that the nation of Israel is about to come to an end.

In Amos 7:1–9 God twice threatens to exterminate the nation¹. On both occasions, because of Amos's intercession, the threat is turned aside.

Then a third threat is presented². This time there is no possibility of intercession changing the situation. Israel has got so bad that the nation is beyond the reach of rescue by Amos' intercessory prayer. Yet on the other hand there is nothing in 7:7–9 that is quite so serious as the threat of extermination that was in 7:1–6. The question of whether Israel will survive at all is left open at that point. Certainly judgement will come, but will the nation be annihilated, never to rise again? At the end of 7:9 it seems that the situation is hopeless.

Before the question of survival is finally answered, Amos 7:10–8:3 invites us to consider the question: will Israel take any notice of God's word? The answer appears to be: no! A wicked priest fiercely opposes Amos's preaching and does his best to get rid of the prophet¹. But God's word and God's prophets cannot be removed so easily. Amos stands firm. He insists on his having been called and sent by God². It will be Amaziah who (because of his rejection of God's word) will be banished from Israel – the very thing Amaziah had wanted for Amos. Amaziah will die outside of his land³. Now Amos 8:1–3 insists that if there is no receiving of the word of God, then for the moment all hope for Israel is lost. 'The end is come upon my people Israel'.

So far the structure of the section is as follows.

God's Sovereign Graciousness (7:1–9:15)

1. Judgement without hope of present renewal (7:1–9)
 - Intercession overcomes earthly judgement (7:1–3)
 - Intercession overcomes eternal judgement (7:4–6)
 - Judgement without benefit of intercession (7:7–9)
2. The word of God rejected (7:10–8:3)
 - Amos opposed (7:10–13)

¹ 7:1-3, 4-6

² 7:7-9

¹ 7:10-13
² 7:14-15

³ 7:16-17

- Amos a true prophet (7:14–15)
- Amaziah is doomed (7:16–17)
- Israel is doomed (8:1–3)

• A basket of ripe (qayits) fruit – the end (qets) is come

• End-of-the-harvest people

¹*'This is what the sovereign Yahweh showed me. Look, a basket of ripe fruit.*
²*And He said, "What do you see, Amos?" And I said, "A basket of ripe fruit". Then Yahweh said to me, "The end is come upon My people Israel; I will not pardon them any more.*
³*And the songs of the palace shall be wailings in that day"— oracle of sovereign Yahweh. "The dead bodies shall be many; in every place they shall throw them aside. Silence!"*

Lessons for our generation

1. There is a pattern of sowing and reaping in God's treatment of His people

2. God is slow to decide when the end has come, slow to insist that harvest-time has arrived

• Deterioration over centuries

• The open door of recovery is to close

3. Eventually a day of reaping arrives

- Assyrian conquest
- Mass deportation
- Volcanic eruption

The section involves a play on words. 'Ripe' is Hebrew qayits; 'end' is Hebrew qets. Amos sees a basket of end-of-the-harvest fruit; God sees an end-of-the-harvest people.

1. There is a pattern of sowing and reaping in God's treatment of His people. Whatever a person sows, he or she reaps. Whatever a church or nation plants in the life of the community, it will eventually lead to consequences in their experience of God. God is not mocked. It is not possible to sow bad seed without reaping the appropriate harvest. Israel had been sowing seeds of idolatry and injustice. Now the time has come for reaping. When the fruit is ripe, harvest time has arrived.

2. God is slow to decide when the end has come, slow to insist that harvest-time has arrived. At the time of Amos' ministry, northern Israel had been deteriorating for centuries. It was Jeroboam I (931–910 BC), the fourth king in the story of Israel, who introduced an idolatry that ruined the life of Israel. He set up 'high places', open-air places of pagan worship. He made non-Levitical priests, who did not descend from the tribe of Levi as was required by God's law ¹. Now it is the time of the second Jeroboam! The life of Israel has sunk to crime, immorality and injustice. The poor are suffering. Gods of fertility are worshipped. Sanctuaries are crowded with worshippers but they are places of paganism.

Not far away, growing increasingly powerful, was Assyria. The preaching of Amos and Hosea gave Israel one more opportunity to turn to Yahweh. While they were hearing the call to repentance from Amos and from Hosea, the door for recovery was open, but it would not stay open for ever. The seed has been sown; the crop is growing; soon 'the end' will come and harvest time will arrive. There is only one hope and that is to dig up the old seed of wickedness, and plant some new seed altogether!

3. Eventually a day of reaping arrives. There comes a time when God refuses to forgive. Individuals may be forgiven, but the nation as a whole reaps the consequences of its centuries of wickedness. At Jeroboam's death his son lasted only six months ¹. Northern Israel was conquered by the Assyrian enemy. Sargon II of Assyria (722/1–705/4) initiated a scheme of mass deportation. The nation of northern Israel ceased to exist. Repentance would have brought a turn-about, but to continue in the ways of idolatry was fatal. Throughout the long days of Jeroboam the Lord was giving

¹ 1 Kings 12:31

¹ 2 Kings 15:8

Israel its last offer of survival. The nation had one generation left before the volcano would erupt. Soon the songs of the palace would become shrieks of distress.

• *Awed silence*

‘*Silence!*’ is the last word of Amos 8:3. As in Amos 6:9–10, when relatives who came to the scene of disaster after an Assyrian invasion would call for awed silence, so in the days when Israel reaps after two centuries of sowing, anyone who witnesses ‘the end’ will stand still in awed silence at the severity and thoroughness of God’s closing judgement.



• *No escape for the nation – northern Israel will soon cease to exist*

Is there any escape from this? Only for individuals. If any one person will hear Amos’s voice and open the doorway of faith in Yahweh and His promises, there will be salvation for that one individual – but the nation as a whole is about to come to its end. Amidst the darkest judgement God can protect individuals but – says Amos – northern Israel will soon cease to exist in the form that it had been known.

• *Sowing and reaping also works the other way round*

The good news for us is that the sowing and reaping can be the other way around. If bad seed reaps its harvest, so does good seed. If those who sow to the flesh reap disaster, equally those who sow to the Spirit reap the blessings of eternal life. The question is: what are we sowing. Everyone ‘ripens’ as time goes by. Sooner or later, everyone gets to be ripe for judgement or ripe for God’s blessing. The question is: which one will it be?

• *Which one will it be?*

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