

## Rev. White's reading notes based on synthetic reading of the book

### Amos

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#### The Shepherd/Farmer Prophet

Amos is called from his shepherd/farmer profession in the southern kingdom of Judah to prophesy against injustice in the nation of Israel. The prophecies of Amos in chapters 1-2 shares God's judgement on neighbor nations who are not children of Jacob including Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, the Ammonites, and Moab. Then Amos's prophecy shifts briefly to Judah before circling around and zeroing in on the nation of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, during the reign of King Jeroboam II.

Amos prophesies against both the unrighteousness of the people and the injustice of the privileged. God reminds them of the history God brought Israel through and declares that the punishment of God is inescapable by even by the strongest and the swiftest.

Chapter 3:1-3 kicks off the message of the next 4 chapters with a solemn declaration. The special relationship that God established with Israel is now the reason that the Israelites will be punished because they have violated God's covenant. This is seen in the assiduous attention that the leaders and the wealthy give to religious ceremony all the while oppressing and afflicting the poor and the needy. God does not accept this kind of worship.

This kind of worship is *whack* because God wants a person's right relationship with God to inform and inspire that person to relate rightly with other people. Failure to do that results in both idolatry and injustice. What God calls for is for justice to *roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream* (Amos 5:24). Righteousness reflects right relationships or treating people with dignity and equity because every person is made in the image of God, no matter their social status or position of privilege or prosperousness of their possessions. God requires righteousness (Hebrew: *tsedaqah*). Additionally, God requires justice (Hebrew: *mishpat*) which reflects the steps a person takes to correct injustice and to restore righteousness.

We also see this connection in Amos 5:4, 6, & 14-15. In v. 4, thus says the Lord, *seek me and live*. In v 6 the Lord says, *seek the Lord and live*. In v 14-15 the Lord says that living is conditioned upon firstly upon seeking good and not evil, secondly upon hating evil and loving good, and thirdly upon establishing justice in the gate. Transitively, seeking the Lord is synonymous with seeking good and establishing justice and living generously. However, the people didn't listen to Amos and so they were subjected to the day of the Lord, the coming of the Assyrian army to mete out God's judgement for their rebelliousness and unrighteousness.

Chapters 7-9 are a series of visions about what the day of the Lord will look like. It ends with a final statement of hope through God's repair and restoration of this punished people. However,

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key to all of this is the requirement that a real relationship with God requires the true worshiper to live in righteousness and justice with other people. This sounds a lot like the injunctions of Leviticus 19:9-18 that talks about the concrete and practical ways that each person is to *love your neighbor as yourself*. This is what righteousness and justice and the true worship of God mean to God.