

# “All the Prophets Testify”: Amos Introduction & 1:1-2

Midweek Bible Study – 2026 February 04

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<https://www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/prophets>

Invocation & Opening Prayer

Follow-up to last class (1/21; sorry about cancelling 1/28): pace, depth, other comments or questions

Amos “Isagogics” (introductory matters prior to “exegesis”, text’s explanation or interpretation):

Who: God inspired the book through the prophet Amos, previously a shepherd like David and other significant Old Testament figures before him, and appropriate with literal shepherding’s relationship to figuratively shepherding done by prophets, priests, and kings. Luther notes that Amos was from Tekoa in the southern kingdom to the northern kingdom and preaches as a foreigner (*TLSB* 1456 but citing AE 35:320-321). *CSSB* notes that whether Amos owned the flocks and groves he tended (7:14) or worked as a hired hand is not known. Keil-Delitzsch remarks on the shepherd’s vocabulary and figures of speech, though we are quick to recall Divine inspiration. Similarly, suggestions based on indications of education that Amos could not be a simple shepherd can be countered with the role of the Holy Spirit.

What: nine-chapter account in words of visions concerning Israel, which can be understood more-narrowly of the northern kingdom only and more-broadly of the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom (usually “Judah”) together, as well as concerning other nations around them.

When: Amos seems to immediately locate the visions that he saw in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and Jeroboam king of Israel, “two years before the earthquake”. *TLSB* p.529 puts Amos in Uzziah’s reign (792-740 BC) and Jeroboam II’s reign (793-753 BC); p.1082 says simply 8th century BC, with reference to Amos; p.1456 likewise says about 792-740 BC. “The earthquake” is usually dated to about 760, which falls in those ranges. The commentators emphasize the relative peace and the prosperity of the land during this time in contrast to the moral decline of worship of God and love of neighbor (for example, rich oppressing the poor).

Where: *TLSB* p.529 puts Jonah in the northern kingdom of Israel; p.1456 lists the places of Judah (the tribe that gives the southern kingdom its name), Jerusalem (the southern and united kingdom’s capital city), Zion (another name for Jerusalem, among other things), Israel (the name for the northern and united kingdoms), Samaria (another name for the northern kingdom and its capital city), Bethel (former place and seat of faithful worship turned new place of unfaithful worship), Gilgal (another former place of faithful worship turned new place of unfaithful worship), Dan (tribe and northern territory and northernmost city, unfaithful worship site and so known for unfaithfulness), and Syria (also called Aram, empire north of Israel, leading city-state was Damascus).

Why: *TLSB* p.1456 says “To warn Israel and Judah that God would punish them for injustice and idolatry, though a remnant would be saved”.

How: *TLSB* p.1456 notes the following:

Law Themes: The nations condemned; the Lord as a lion; only a remnant (insofar as “only”); unfaithful worship; the day of the Lord (we remember that the judgment on God’s enemies is also deliverance for God’s people).

Gospel Themes: The remnant; seek the Lord and live; the booth of David; restoration of Israel; the Lord relents (or, as we discussed with Joel and Jonah, people change in their relationship to God [we distinguish between His antecedent will to save and His consequent will to damn]). The CPH editors of *CSSB* emphasize the final verses that predict a reconstituted Israel in which the Messiah brings the Kingdom of God.

Outline (the following is from *TLSB* p.1457; we are listing the major divisions after the superscription and will expand/collapse them as we proceed through them [confer and compare, for example, the outline in *God’s Word for Today*, p.11, and *CSSB*, p.1351]):

- I. Judgment against the Nations (1:3-2:16)
- II. Declarations concerning Israel (3:1-6:14)
- III. Visions (7:1-9:15)

Superscription (1:1-2):

1:1 *The words ... which he saw*: the word of the Lord came to Joel, but Amos saw Divine visions and reported them in words (confer the Revelation to St. John). We appropriately might think of the Bible’s emphases on words and deeds (a arguable priority on the words that explain the deeds), and of the Service of the Word and the Service of the Sacrament. *of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa*: Amos’s name means “a load”; it may be a shortened form of a name like “Amasiah”, which means “The Lord carries” or “The Lord upholds”. He was likely more “of” than “in the midst of” the shepherds of Tekoa. The word translated “shepherd” is not the usual word for the position. How much to make of it at this point is not clear, but Amos was a layman and not a “professional” prophet. Tekoa is a village in Judah, not far from Bethlehem, home of David, another notable shepherd.

*concerning Israel*: the immediate context would suggest taking Israel more-narrowly as the northern Kingdom than more-broadly as the united Kingdom. While Amos has a primary focus on Israel, the southern Kingdom of Judah and the surrounding kingdoms are also addressed.

*in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel*: as noted above, *TLSB* p.529 lists Uzziah’s reign as 792-740 BC and Jeroboam II’s reign as 793-753 BC. At 1:1, *TLSB* refers to Amos’s ministry taking place between about 792 and 740 BC, though the latter years of that range would not be during the reign of Jeroboam II. Compare *CSSB*, which says the main part of the ministry was probably about 760 to 750 BC. There seems to be no reason to think that the revelation and relevancy were not for the same period.

*two years before the earthquake*: *TLSB* discusses the dating of the earthquake to about 760 BC and so the dating of Amos’s ministry to the years just prior and notes that archaeologists have found evidence of the earthquake’s destruction at Hazor and that it is also mentioned in Zechariah 14:5. *CSSB* suggests that Amos mentions it may suggest he saw it as a kind of Divine reinforcement of the words of judgment.

2:1 *And he said*: what Amos said, on behalf of the Lord (compare Kretzmann and see 2:3). Presumably what Amos saw in a vision.

*The LORD roars ... utters his voice*: Poetic parallelism roughly equates the two expressions. *TLSB* comments, “Amos compares his prophetic revelations to the terrifying roar of a lion. Such imagery commanded Israel’s undivided attention and hints that this prophets’ words focus on judgment.” Laetsch notes the roaring can be related to hunger and eagerness to satisfy it, joyful assurance of victory, defiance of intruders, *et cetera*. Commentators suggest Hosea borrows “the Lord roars from Zion” from Joel 3:16, and we again remember the Holy Spirit as the ultimate author of both. *CSSB* connects the shepherd and the lion, with the Lord wanting to be Israel’s shepherd but having to be the lion.

*from Zion ... from Jerusalem*: the two can both have nuanced senses. In this case of poetic parallelism we likely should take the references as synonymous and to the place of, *TLSB* mentions, David’s throne and Solomon’s temple. Laetsch points out the legitimate place of worship in contrast to the idolatrous sanctuaries of the northern kingdom that are condemned in what follows.

*the pastures of the shepherds ... the top of Carmel*: in this case the two locations are different but likely taken as an extent of distance, perhaps the lowest places to the highest. *CSSB* suggests from the driest to the greenest. Laetsch suggests the first to feel the drought to the last to feel it. *TLSB* notes that God’s judgment would produce a drought devastating to the pasture land and that the mountain was notorious for Baal worship, as in 1 Kings 18:20-29.

*mourn ... withers*: both verbs are ostensibly responses to the Lord’s judgment. *TLSB* notes that the withering ridicules Baal, the phony lord of rain and fertility, who cannot prevent his mountain from becoming parched and bare. At least implicit is a call to repentance to result in being spared the promised judgment. Luther notes the poor result and says that generally we should not expect anything different in our own times.

What are you taking home from the prophecy considered tonight?

Next time, February 11, Amos 1:3-2:3 (Ash Wednesday 2/18)

Closing Prayer & Benediction