

# Amos 6 - Israel's Ease to Turn to Suffering

III. Three sermons of judgment (Amos 3:1—6:14)

(3) Certainty of Israel's judgment: funeral dirge (Amos 5:1—6:14)

(D) Two concluding woes (Amos 5:18—6:14)

(b) Concerning the false security of riches (6:1-14)

(i) False security of riches (6:1-6)

(ii) Resulting in exile (6:7)

(iii) False security of pride (6:8a)

(iv) Resulting in destruction (6:8b-14)

(a) City to be captured (6:8b)

(b) Jewish people destroyed (6:9-10)

(c) Homes destroyed (6:11)

(d) A nation to be raised against Israel (6:12-14)

## Amos 6

(b) Concerning the false security of riches (6:1-14)

(i) False security of riches (6:1-6)

**1** **Woe** to those who are carefree in Zion, And to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, The dignitaries of the foremost of nations, To whom the house of Israel comes.

**1** Woe to those who are at ease in Zion And to those who *feel* secure in the mountain of Samaria, The distinguished men of the foremost of nations, To whom the house of Israel comes.

**1** "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, to those who rest on the mountain of Samaria—the famous men of the nations to whom the house of Israel came!

**1** Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!

- "Woe" - *Hoi*, admonition and lamentation; it means to stop, look and listen because this is something that is important

— It should draw special attention to that which follows...

- Those who felt "carefree in Zion" and "secure in Samaria" were the subjects of this message

— Specifically, Amos is speaking to the "dignitaries" that the rest of the people looked up to; these leaders regarded Israel and Judah as the foremost of the nations of their day

2 Go over 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 greater than yours?

2 Go over 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 greater than yours?

2 Cross over to Calneh and look around, then go on to that great city of Hamath, and from there go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory more extensive than yours?

2 Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?

- God challenged these proud leaders to visit other cities that had once considered themselves great

- "...Calneh" - or Calno; a city-state in northern Syria (Is 10:9)

- "...Hamath" - Shalmaneser III of Assyria had overrun both Hamath and Calneh in 854-846 BC, but Israel controlled them in Amos' day

- "...Gath" - a notable city in Philistia, but fell before King Hazael of Aram in 815 BC and again to King Uzziah of Judah in 760 BC

— Judah controlled Gath in Amos' day

— Samaria was no better than those city-states, and their territories were larger than Samaria's, yet they had fallen to foreign invaders. What had happened to them could happen to Samaria—even though the people of Israel believed that *Yahweh* would protect it.

3 Are you postponing the day of disaster, And would you bring near the seat of violence?

3 Do you put off the day of calamity, And would you bring near the seat of violence?

3 "Disbelieving that a day of evil will come, embracing opportunities to commit violence,

3 Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;

- The leaders of Samaria dismissed the possibility that calamity would overtake their city, but they were really hastening the day of terror (or "seat of violence") by refusing to acknowledge and repent of their sins.

— Amos raised the possibilities as questions, but the answers were obvious

The 31 years following King Jeroboam II's reign saw increasingly worse conditions for the Northern Kingdom (Cf. 2 Kings 15:8—17:6). Six kings reigned, three of whom seized power by political coup and assassination. Fear and violence marked this period (Cf. 2 Kings 15:16).

4 Those who lie on beds of ivory, And lounge around on their couches, And eat lambs from the flock, And calves from the midst of the fattened cattle,

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,

4 lying on ivory beds, stretching out on your couches, eating lambs from the flock, and fattened calves from the stall,

4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;

- Amos described the luxury and self-indulgence that characterized the leaders of Samaria during his day

— They reclined on very expensive beds inlaid with ivory. They lounged, implying laziness or drunkenness, on their couches. They ate the best, most tender meat available.

5 Who improvise to the sound of the harp, *And* like David have composed songs for themselves,

5 Who improvise to the sound of the harp, *And* like David have composed songs for themselves,

5 chanting to the sound of stringed instruments as if they were David, composing songs to themselves as if they were musicians,

5 That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David;

- They imitated great King David by composing and improvising songs and inventing musical instruments, but they entertained themselves rather than praising God

6 Who drink wine from sacred bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils— Yet they have not grieved over the collapse of Joseph.

6 Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.

6 drinking wine from bowls, anointing themselves with the choicest of oils, but not grieving on the occasion of Joseph's ruin—

6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

- They consumed wine by the bowl rather than in cups

- They also spent much time anointing their bodies with oils and lotions in order to preserve and enhance their appearance

— Instead, the Israelites should have been mourning over the moral weakness and decadence of their nation that would lead to its ruin

(ii) Resulting in exile (6:7)

7 Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, And the revelry of those who lounge around will come to an end.

7 Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, And the sprawlers' banqueting will pass away.

7 therefore you will be the first to go into exile, and the celebrations of those who are lounging will end."

7 Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

- Amos announced that these luxuriant leaders would go into captivity "at the head of" the people of Israel. Their banquets would cease, and they would lounge on their soft couches no longer.

— Those who were first in prominence and sin will be the first in punishment and captivity

(iii) False security of pride (6:8a)

(iv) Resulting in destruction (6:8b-14)

(a) City to be captured (6:8b)

**8** The Lord GOD has **sworn by Himself**, the LORD God of armies has declared: "I loathe the arrogance of **Jacob**, And detest his citadels; Therefore I will give up *the* city and all it contains."

**8** The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, the LORD God of hosts has declared: "I loathe the arrogance of Jacob, And detest his citadels; Therefore I will deliver up *the* city and all it contains."

8 "The Lord GOD has sworn by himself," declares the LORD, the God of the Heavenly Armies, "I utterly detest the arrogance of Jacob; I hate his fortresses; and I will deliver up the city, along with everyone in it.

8 The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

- "...sworn by Himself" - this was a solemn warning because God can swear by no one greater than Himself (Cf. Heb 6:13-14)

- "...Jacob" - refers to the northern kingdom (Cf. 3:13)

(b) Jewish people destroyed (6:9-10)

9 And it will be, if ten men are left in one house, they will die.

9 And it will be, if ten men are left in one house, they will die.

9 "And if there are ten men remaining in one house, they will die.

9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.

- So thorough would be the overthrow, that even if 10 men took refuge in one house, they could not preserve their own lives

— The idea seems to be that even if the army was reduced to 10 men, and if they took refuge in the single house that remained, they would still die

10 Then one's uncle, or his undertaker, will lift him up to carry out *his* bones from the house, and he will say to the one who is in the innermost part of the house, "Is anyone else with you?" And that one will say, "No one." Then he will answer, "Keep quiet! For the name of the LORD is not to be mentioned."

10 Then one's uncle, or his undertaker, will lift him up to carry out *his* bones from the house, and he will say to the one who is in the innermost part of the house, "Is anyone else with you?" And that one will say, "No one." Then he will answer, "Keep quiet. For the name of the LORD is not to be mentioned."

10 One's relative will pick up the corpse to carry them from the house for burning, saying to whomever remains inside the house, 'Is there anyone still with you?' And he will say, 'No.' He will respond, 'Be quiet, because we do not mention the name "LORD"'

10 And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD.

- If the "uncle" of one of the dead rulers came to bury his nephew ("carry out his bones"), or if a less interested "undertaker" did so, those still alive and hiding in the house would beg him not to reveal their presence

(c) Homes destroyed (6:11)

11 For behold, the LORD is going to command that the great house be smashed to pieces, and the small house to rubble.

11 For behold, the LORD is going to command that the great house be smashed to pieces and the small house to fragments.

11 For indeed, the LORD is giving the command— and he will smash the large house to rubble and the small house into bits.

11 For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts.

- *Yahweh* was going to command the utter destruction of all the houses in Samaria, small and great. Not only would the people of the city die (v9-10), but the houses of the rich and poor would also perish.

(d) A nation to be raised against Israel (6:12-14)

**12** Do horses run on rocks? Or does one plow *them* with oxen? Yet you have turned justice into poison, And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood,

**12** Do horses run on rocks? Or does one plow them with oxen? Yet you have turned justice into poison And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood,

12 "Horses don't run over bare rock, do they? One doesn't plow rock with oxen, does he? But you have turned justice to gall, and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness.

12 Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:

- It was as unnatural for Israel's leaders to live as they did as it was for horses to run on rocky crags, or for oxen to plow rocks

— Horses normally ran on rock-free ground, and oxen plowed fields from which farmers had removed the rocks

— Yet these leaders had replaced justice with corrupt courtroom decisions that had killed the defendants—just as though they had given them "poison"

— Righteous conduct by the rulers should have resulted in grace for the poor, that would have been sweet to their taste—but the treatment they received was instead bitter to their souls

13 You who rejoice in **Lodebar**, And say, "Have we not by our *own* strength taken **Karnaim** for ourselves?"

13 You who rejoice in Lodebar, And say, "Have we not by our *own* strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?"

13 You rejoice in nothing worth mentioning— that is, you keep on saying, 'We captured Karnaim by our own strength of will and by our own effort, didn't we?'

13 Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?

- "...Lodebar" - the leaders felt very proud and confident because under Jeroboam II, Israel had recaptured some territory that it had formerly lost to Aram (Cf. 2 Kings 14:25)

— This included the town of Lo-debar in Transjordan (Cf. 2 Sam 9:4; 17:27)

— Amos, however, cleverly made light of this feat by mispronouncing the city "Lo-dabar," which means "not a thing." They had taken nothing of much value.

- "...Karnaim" - the people were also claiming that they had taken this town by their own strength

— It was not they but Yahweh, however, who had strengthened them to achieve this victory over a symbolically strong town

— Actually, Karnaim was quite insignificant

14 "For behold, I am going to raise up a nation against you, House of Israel," declares the LORD God of armies, "And they will torment you from the entrance of Hamath To the brook of the Arabah."

14 "For behold, I am going to raise up a nation against you, O house of Israel," declares the LORD God of hosts, "And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath To the brook of the Arabah."

14 "So look, house of Israel! I will raise up a nation against you," declares the LORD, the God of the Heavenly Armies, "and they will harass you from the entrance of Hamath to the wadi of the wilderness."

14 But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness.

- The Lord God of armies announced that He would raise up a nation against the northern kingdom

— Once again, God's people would fall under the control of a foreign oppressor, as they had done in the past (Cf. Ex 3:9; Judges 2:18; 4:3; 6:9; 10:11-12; 1 Sam 10:17-18)

— This nation would "torment" the Israelites throughout the nation, from "Hamath" in the north to "the brook of the Arabah" in the south

In summary, the reasons for Israel's coming judgment that Amos identified in these five messages were: legal injustice, economic exploitation, religious hypocrisy, luxurious self-indulgence, and boastful complacency. These sins involved unfaithfulness to *Yahweh*, the all-powerful Lord of Israel—with whom the Israelites lived in covenant relationship. Though national judgment was inevitable, individuals who repented could escape punishment.