

Major Messages from the Minor Prophets
You are Going to Die, Then What?
The Book of Amos

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Text Introduction: The Prophets of the Old Testament are divided by scholars into the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. More precisely, we call Isaiah, along with Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel, Major Prophets. The remaining books of the Old Testament are called Minor Prophets. The terms major and minor refer to the size of these books, not the degree of their importance.¹

There are 12 Minor Prophets. We are studying through the Minor Prophets. We will devote one Sunday (one message) to each of the 12 Minor Prophets. Our goal is to discover that central core message of the book.

Today, we are examining the Book of Amos. I want to start with just one verse—Amos 4:12.

Text: Therefore, Israel, that is what I will do to you,
and since I will do that to you,
Israel, prepare to meet your God!

Introduction: I absolutely can't read Amos 4:12 without thinking about one of my favorite Bro. Perry stories. One cold winter night, Bro. Perry had travelled to North Louisiana to preach. Oliver Carmichael was with him. On the way home they stopped to get gas and a snack at a rural convenience store. Bro. Perry was pumping the gas while Oliver went inside to an empty store except for the one employee. After pumping the gas, Bro. Perry pushed open the door of the store and said to the lone employee, "Sir, Are you ready to die tonight?"

Oliver said that he just knew that poor clerk thought he was about to be the victim of an armed robbery. When the clerk gained his composure, he was a captive audience to the glorious good news of the Gospel.

We don't like to think about death, but we must think about what happens after we die. One day we will die, then what? We prepare for most everything else in life if we are smart. When our children are in elementary school, we are helping them prepare for high school. High School students should be preparing for what's next—college, a career in the work-force, or the military. In these settings, we are preparing. Once in our careers, we are preparing for retirement. We prepare wills to help give instruction for those things after our lives. We must prepare also to die. Or as the text gives us in Amos, we must "prepare to meet God." Amos helps us to answer the question of preparing to die.

Overview of Amos:

Amos, like the other prophets, prophesied of the coming judgment against Israel and Judah. Amos prophesied in the days before the exile. His message then is similar to the prophets we have encountered thus far.

¹ Lamentations is considered with these books as a major prophet because it is written by Jeremiah.

A simple way to divide the book is to isolate Amos' messages in the first six chapters and Amos' visions in chapters seven through nine.

The Messages of Amos:

With this division, we can then summarize the messages of Amos in Amos 1-6.

Amos 1-2 The message of judgment starts outside of Israel and gets increasingly tighter until the message "zeroes" in on Israel. The sequence of judgment began with the transgressions of Damascus (1:3) but ends with the transgressions of Israel (2:6).

Amos 3 In this chapter, through Amos, God pleads with Israel to repent.

Amos 4 This chapter chronicles the fact that Israel has refused to repent. The effect of this refusal is that they "Prepare to meet {their} God" (4:12).

Amos 5 This chapter is Amos' funeral song for what is going to happen in Israel culminating in the fact that God is going to ignore their worship (5:21-22).

Amos 6 This chapter is a last gasp to get Israel's attention. They are admonished to not be in ease (6:1). They felt at ease because the economy was good and they were at peace. Israel thought that life could be no better, but actually life could be no worse for them. The modern day parallel to this truth is especially significant. Most in the church today are at ease.

The Visions of Amos: The book concludes with several visions to further warn Israel.

<u>Vision</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
Locusts	7:1-3	Nation-wide Famine
Consuming Fire	7:4-7	Total Destruction
Plumb Line	7:7-9	Certainty of Destruction
Basket of Fruit	8:1-3	Imminent Doom (Ripe)
Lord Standing by Altar	9:1-4	No one can escape

In the first two cases, Amos intercedes, and God relents. In the last three Amos does not intercede. The significance of this progression is that judgment is certain. The opportunity for repentance has passed.

Understanding Amos Today:

So, how are we to understand Amos' message today? Again, I go back to 4:12. Amos pleaded with Israel to recognize their sin and be prepared to meet God. We can take Amos' message to heart to understand that we must be ready to deal with our sin and to meet God.

Three things you better know before you meet God:

We all have sinned!

This is the point of chapters 1-2. He starts with Israel's neighbors, but then he comes to Israel. Did you ever notice how much easier it is to talk about someone else's sins and miss yours? One of the things

that we must nail down before we die is that we are all sinners, and that sin is a horrible offense against the Holy God who created us. There is no escaping that we are all sinners.

Sin brings consequences!

This is the point of chapter 3. Through a series of analogies based upon rhetorical questions in chapter 3, Amos drives home this point of consequences. For every action there is an effect.

To live, we must seek God!

Right here in the heart of this prophecy, we get this good news—Seek God and live (5:5, 5:6, 5:14).

So What?

I could have called this message the “Gospel According to Amos.”

The Book of Romans takes us through this same sequence. Sometimes people have referred to the Roman Road.

Romans 3:23—For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 6:23—For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul went farther than Amos. He gave us the good news, but he was still revealing that for every action there is an effect. Because of sin, the consequence is death. But, because of Jesus, there can be life. How did that life come about?

Romans 5:8—But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us! So what do we do?

Romans 10:9-10—If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation.”

And then, finally...

Romans 10:13—Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Have F.A.I.T.H

- Everybody needs forgiveness.
- Forgiveness is available, but it is not automatic.
- Forgiveness and eternal life is impossible outside of Jesus.
- We must be willing to turn away from our sin and self and turn to Jesus.
- If we are willing to turn away from our sin and to Jesus, heaven can be ours—both in eternity and now.

Be willing to say today, forsaking all, I trust Him.

Once you have faith, have a burden to share that faith.

The uniqueness of Amos is that he was not seen as a “professional” prophet. He was “among the shepherders.” Amos 7:14 is something of a familiar quotation from Amos. “I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs. But the Lord took me from following the flock and the Lord said to me, ‘Go prophesy to My people Israel.’”

The application to draw from this observation about Amos is that God has always used ordinary people to accomplish his purposes. Amos did not consider himself to be a prophet. As a shepherd and grower of figs, he probably considered himself to be the most unlikely candidate to bring a message to Israel. Maybe you consider yourself to be an unlikely candidate to be used by God, but remember two things. First, God uses whom He wishes. Second, God equips those whom He calls. The question is whether we will be obedient to do what God calls us to do.

Amos’ name literally means “to carry a load” or “to carry a burden.” Amos carried the burden of sharing with Israel that they must prepare to meet God. We must carry that same burden.

Conclusion: I am not sure why, but I have three dreams that recur often. One dream involves my days as a football player in college. We had certain goals that we were supposed to meet related to running and weight lifting. We, of course, trained all year to prepare for the season. In my dream, the time of reporting for football practice is approaching and I haven’t gotten myself in shape yet. The other dream involves a French class that I took in college. In my dream, the Final exam is approaching and I remember that I have forgotten to go to that class for the entire semester. The third dream concerns my life as a preacher. In the dream, the worship service has begun, but I realize that I am not prepared to deliver the sermon.

I don’t know the meaning of those dreams, if any, but I know this: It is an awful thing not to be prepared. Not being prepared for football practice, an exam, or a sermon is nothing compared to not being ready to meet God.