

Amos

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Amos 3:9-15

Vss. 9-10

- The Hebrew word here for "Proclaim" means "cause to make heard". Get their attention. Shake them up. Here is a rhetorical invitation to Israel's pagan neighbors, Egypt and Ashdod/Assyria to come and sit on the mountains overlooking Samaria, the capital city of the Northern Kingdom, and watch her moral and spiritual failures. The implication is that Israel's pagan neighbors understand basic morality better than she does. For Israel does not know how to do what is right.
- The evidence that Israel does not know how to do what is right is seen in how they hoard up what they have stolen by violence. Their oppression of the poor is there for all to see as they flaunt what they have stolen.
- Samaria had been built on top of a large hill around 870 BC by King Omri, (1 Kings 16). As to its defenses, it was laid out perfectly. With deep valleys on three sides, attack was possible only from the north east. When the Assyrians came knocking in 722 BC it took them three years to take the city.

Vss. 11-12

- The adversary is never identified but Amos is likely thinking of the Assyrian empire. All that Israel has stolen will be stolen from them. In every case of God's judgement and punishment throughout the Old Testament, the punishment always equals the crime.
- And little will be left of Israel's beloved riches. A piece here, a shred there will be all that remains. You might find the corner leg of a bed or the blanket off a couch. Such will be the thoroughness of Israel's destruction for its punishment.

Vss. 13-14

- Samaria was the Northern Kingdom's political and financial capital. Bethel was its spiritual capital and at the same time a resort city for the wealthy.

- “Hear and testify against the house of Jacob” carries with it the sound of a covenant lawsuit, a lawsuit that “the Lord God, the God of Hosts” is bringing. This is the only place in the Bible where all four Hebrew expressions for God’s person are used together: Elohim, Adonai, Yahweh, and ts’ba’oth. As a title, “God of Hosts” brings forward God’s sovereignty, strength, and power.
- The word “testify” can mean “witness”, so this is a call to hear the witnesses of Israel’s violation of its covenant agreement with God.
- “On the day” surely sounded ominous to Amos’ hearers, for it implied that God had already set the day. Here it is not simply the country but the altar at Bethel that will be punished. This is a direct attack on the priests and keepers of the altar. They were guilty of bending God’s law to justify the crimes of the rich against the poor and of polluting God’s truth to justify evil.
- The “horns of the altar” were its large corners, fashioned with figures and symbols, and were large enough for someone to hide under, take refuge under whereby a person would be under the protection of God. But no, these too will be cut off and will fall to the ground. Amos promised that on that day every place of refuge will be stripped away. There will be no place to hide. Such a proclamation would have been a shock, a sacrilege, to Amos’ hearers, for to lose your altar was tantamount to losing your nation.
- If the Assyrians only left pieces of Samaria and Bethel in 722 BC, then those pieces were destroyed by Josiah when he came with his army in 621 BC (2 Kings 23:15) and he demolished the altar and ground it to dust.

Vs. 15

- If God was going to destroy His own house in Bethel, what would He do to yours? The resort homes, the luxury houses of Israel’s rich and famous would all be destroyed. How ostentatious can you be when you use ivory not just as a furnishing but as a building material as well? “The great houses”, the great families will come to an end.