

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

James M. Gray, D.D.

Fleming H. Revell Company

Copyright © 1906

by

Fleming H. Revell, Westwood, New Jersey

edited for 3BSB by Baptist Bible Believer in the spirit of the Colportage Ministry of a century
ago

~ out-of-print and in the public domain ~

LESSON TWENTY-SIX

AMOS

Read 1:1 and gather out what it teaches of the personal history of the prophet.

- in what town did he dwell?
- what was his original occupation?
- to which kingdom was he commissioned as a prophet?
- who was the king of Israel at the time?

Now turn back to the time of that king (Jeroboam II), as recorded, II Kings 14:23-29. You will recall what was said in an earlier lesson about its being a golden age of Israel. What made it so?

- In the first place, the long reign of the king, the longest of any in the annals of the kingdom. How long was it?
- In the second place, the victories and gains on the battlefield. How are they alluded to?
- In the third place, the evidence of GOD's interest in their affairs as shown in the fulfillment of prophecy. Whose prophecy is referred to?

But though it was a golden age in one sense, it was leaden in another. As the study of Amos reveals, their outward or political prosperity was associated with a gross inward or moral corruption, as has been the case with many another nation down to our own time.

Discourses Concerning the Nations, 1:3-2:3

Returning to the book of Amos, observe that its first natural division (after the introduction in vv. 1 and 2), consists of discourses concerning the Gentile nations.

While the Old Testament is concerned chiefly with GOD's peculiar people, the Jews, and for the reasons already outlined more than once, it must not be forgotten that He never left Himself without witness to the other nations as well. In this connection read Acts 10:34, 35.

Sometimes these Gentile nations were used of GOD as scourges upon Israel for her sins, but when they in their wickedness and greed followed out their own bent, and went further in that affliction than He desired, the rod sooner or later was laid upon their own backs. Read Zechariah 1:14, 15.

These discourses in Amos we are now considering carry our thoughts in this line.

- how many such nations are addressed?
- of what nation was Damascus the capital? And Gaza?

Examine the map, and locate the different nations geographically, as a quickener to your interest. What peculiar phrase introduces each discourse? This does not mean that the given nation had sinned only three or four times, but is a Hebraism indicating that the transgression had been innumerable often.

There are one or two observations of a general character that apply not only to these discourses, but to all in this book, and for that matter to all the books of the prophets. We are not to suppose, for example, that these are all the discourses concerning the nations which the prophet ever delivered, or that we have the whole of anyone discourse in these records; but only so much of the given matter as the HOLY SPIRIT deemed necessary to transmit to later generations. It is not affirmed that this is absolutely the case, but only that there is no obligation upon us to believe otherwise.

Discourse Concerning Judah, 2:4, 5

Tekoa, where Amos lived, and where probably he was born, was a city of the kingdom of Judah, as the map or the Bible dictionary will disclose; but notwithstanding that, he was not commissioned to his own people, as we have seen, but to the sister kingdom of Israel. An interesting allusion to that fact will be considered again when we reach chapter 7:12, 13, which please examine in connection with the context. This is the only discourse to Judah (2:4, 5) contained in the whole book, and need not arrest our attention now, as so much of the other books of the prophets deals with that kingdom.

Discourses Concerning Israel, 2:6-9:15

You will have noticed that from verse 6 of chapter 2, till the end of the book Amos is dealing only with Israel. Here are doubtless the synopses of several discourses, and it will be seen that they are built up and put together on as regular a plan as any of the orderly discourses of our own

time.

We will outline one or two of them as samples of the whole. Most of the commentators regard the first discourse as ending with the chapter, since the following chapter begins abruptly with another command to "Hear."

This first discourse, therefore, is composed of three divisions:

1. Their sins are charged against them (1:6-8).
2. Their mercies and blessings are recalled (1:9-12).
3. Their punishment is announced (1:13-16).

Notice that their sins were in the nature of oppression of the poor, lust, idolatry, and greed. The mercies and benefits referred to should be fresh in our minds after the recent study of the Pentateuch, but the marginal references will refresh the memory where anything has been forgotten. The punishment spoken of may be said to have reached a climax in the vicissitudes coming upon them through Assyria, and their final captivity, as we have seen. Re-examine II Kings 15-17.

One more discourse may be selected for analysis before we proceed, because of its reference to

The Prophet's Call, 3:1-8

You will remember the circumstances of the divine call of Moses, Samuel, Elisha and other of the prophets; and how, in one way or another they were afterwards obliged to demonstrate their authority to the people. Moses' rod turned into a serpent is in point. Read also I Samuel 3:19,20, and Matthew 21:23.

All the prophets more or less, were thus obliged to give an account of themselves, and no wonder, when we consider the serious and startling nature of their messages at times. Amos is no exception to this rule, and in the chapter before us proceeds to give an account of his call, only he does so in oriental fashion and in a very roundabout way.

In the realm of nature a certain effect always follows a given cause, and his point is that GOD's command was the cause in this case, and his prophesying the effect. In a word, he prophesied because he could not help himself, he could not do otherwise under the circumstances. Read especially verse 8, but in connection with the preceding verses 3-7, where each interrogation assumes a negative reply.

This introduces us to the second of the discourses concerning Israel, of which the first division may be designated as the prophet's call. The second division (vv. 9, 10), is an indictment against them on account of sin, and the third (vv. 11-14), their punishment is announced as in the former instance.

Read verse 12 carefully, and observe the figure of a shepherd engaged in a personal encounter with a wild beast in order to rescue a sheep of his flock, an experience evidently not uncommon in the East (I Samuel 17:34-37). But in this instance the destroyer gets almost the whole; almost,

but not quite. How much does the valiant shepherd secure in either case? Very little indeed, but something. There would no significance attach to this of a prophetic character, were it not for the plain statements in other places that, although Israel would be severely punished, yet she would not as a nation be utterly and forever exterminated. A remnant would be saved, and this rather graphic figure, suggested by what Amos had himself seen or experienced as a caretaker of a flock, seems intended to foreshadow it.

The purpose of calling attention to it just now is to prepare the class for similar allusions later on, which finally, in the aggregate, assume the proportions of a demonstration of the fact referred to - Israel's preservation and restoration in the latter days.

The Prophetic Visions, Chapters 7-9

It is hardly necessary to continue the analysis of subsequent discourses, which are all of the same general character until we come to the last three chapters of the book.

Here we have a series of visions which in the estimation of some were each expanded into a discourse. You will observe three of these visions in chapter 7, at the beginning of the chapter, one in chapter 8, and another in chapter 9. In the case of the first two, the judgments of the grasshopper and the fire (the meaning of which is very apparent to the prophet as signifying chastisement for his people), his intercessions on their behalf are represented as successful (7:3, 6), but in the following instances such is not the case (7:7-9, also 8:3; 9:1-4).

Bear in mind the time of Amos' prophecy, 70 or 80 years prior to the Assyrian captivity, in which sad event these predictions had their fulfillment, approximately at least, however Israel's present condition may be regarded as a farther and more complete fulfillment.

Opposition Expressed, 7:10-17

At the risk of breaking into the continuity of our thought just here, let us follow the course of the sacred record itself in noticing the opposition presented to the prophet's ministry.

- who is the official opponent here?
- what was the object of worship at Bethel (I Kings 12)?
- what language indicates the effect of Amos' messages?
- how bold and direct were his utterances (v. 11)?
- what shows his personal courage (v. 13)?
- what further details of his history does the incident bring to light (vv. 14, 15)?
- what special punishment is now predicted upon the wicked and GOD. defying priest (vv. 16, 17)?

Your particular attention is called to verses 14 and 15, referring more at length to the prophet's early occupation and circumstances of his call.

In the second book of Kings, allusion now and again is made to the "**schools of the prophets**," and the "**sons of the prophets**," of whom Elijah, and afterwards Elisha, was at the head. Nothing definitely is known of the origin or history of these schools, though it is supposed they were

instituted by Samuel (I Samuel 7:15, 16), something on the idea of our theological seminaries, for the training of consecrated youth in the knowledge of the law and the prophets.

It is evident that the religious teachers of Israel at this time were largely drawn from these sources, but it is also evident that then, as now, GOD was pleased to go outside of the regular order occasionally in the calling and equipping of His servants, in order, doubtless, that the cause might not be lost sight of in the result, and that His glory might not be given to another (Zechariah 4:6).

There are some who will read this to whom it may be a comfort, even if to others it should be a rebuke.

The Promises for Israel, 9:11-15

It is the characteristic of all the books of the prophets that no matter how much rebuke and threatened punishment they contain as against Israel or Judah, they always see a better time ahead, when the people shall have learnt their severe lessons and profited by them, and GOD can be glorified in them.

We have already seen a reason for this in the fact earlier discussed, that Israel was, is, and is to be, the channel of blessing to the whole earth.

To begin with, look at verses 8 and 9 of the last chapter. GOD will destroy the sinful kingdom, but will it be utterly destroyed? He will sift Israel among all the nations, as He is surely doing now, but will there be nothing left in the sieve? How do these two verses agree with our conception of 3:12?

But to come now to the plainer and more specific declaration of verses 11-15 of the last chapter. What are these promises?

- The restoration of the kingdom, 11.
- The possession of the nations, 12.
- The prosperity of the land, 13, 14.
- The perpetuity of the possession. 15.

- is the kingdom of Israel some day to be restored?
- is that people to bear sway on the earth?
- will the land be fruitful as of old, and even more so, and the cities be built up and inhabited by them again?
- will it be a time of rest for them from enemies and war?

Such seems to be the literal construction of these verses.

To be sure, James' words in Acts 15:13-17 are to be reckoned with, which seem to imply a spiritual fulfillment of these promises in the history of the Christian church. But at the risk of stepping aside for a moment from our prescribed path of synthetic teaching to that of interpretation, let us look carefully at those two words, "**After this**," in Acts 15:16.

James has just said that GOD was now visiting the Gentiles "**to take out of them a people for His name,**" i. e. (as many understood it), GOD is calling out the church from the world to become the body of CHRIST; and when this is done, when the church or body of CHRIST is completed and caught up to meet Him in the air (I Thessalonians 4:16, 17), then "**agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, After this, I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David,** etc."

The thought is that Israel's restoration will be literal, as Amos prophesies, but that its time will be after the second coming of CHRIST, and what is called the "rapture" of the church. There is so much of this kind of teaching found in the prophets to follow, that it seemed necessary at the beginning, and in order to clear the atmosphere somewhat, to present both sides of the case. As we proceed in the other instances you will thus be the better able to form your own intelligent conclusion. May we all be much in prayer for the enlightenment of the HOLY SPIRIT, without which our own wisdom at the best is but foolishness.

~ end of Lesson 26 ~
