Amos

### Judgment for Social Injustice

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- **“This is what the LORD says…”**  
  (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4)
- **“Hear this word…”**  
  (3:1; 4:1; 5:1)
- **“This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me…”**  
  (7:1, 4, 7; 8:1)
- **“In that day…” and “The days are coming…”**  
  (9:11, 13)

- **God’s Impartiality**
- **God’s Justice**
- **God’s Judgments**
- **God’s Grace**

- **Pronouncements of Judgment**
- **Provocations of Judgment**
- **Future of Judgment**
- **Promises after Judgment**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Horror</td>
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- **Neighbor Nations**
- **Northern Nation**

*767-753 BC (before the fall of Samaria)*

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**Key Word:** Injustice

**Key Verse:** “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream”  
(Amos 5:24).

**Summary Statement:**  
Amos’ message of judgment upon social injustices of Israel and the surrounding nations warns of the coming exile and declares God’s promise to restore a remnant in faithfulness to the Davidic Covenant to urge the nation to repent.

**Application:**

Prosperous Christians must not wink at social injustice.
1. What social injustices do you see in Singapore society?
2. What responsibility does the Church have to correct these wrongs?
3. What is God telling you to do about a social inequity?
I. Title  The name Amos (עמוס) is derived from the verb ‘amas (עמיס) "to load" or "to carry a load," and thus means "burden" or "burden-bearer" (BDB 770c). The significance of such a name is seen in the largely heavy nature of the prophecy. Of the nine chapters only eight verses refer to anything positive, that being the restoration of the nation (cf. 9:8-15).

II. Authorship

A. External Evidence: Amos' authorship has not been seriously debated.

B. Internal Evidence: Amos describes himself as a shepherd (1:1), herdsman (7:14) and grower of sycamore figs (7:14). He came from the rural area of Tekoa, twelve miles south of Jerusalem. While this description may sound like he was a poor man (LaSor, 319), the Hebrew may suggest otherwise (Sunukjian, BKC, 1:1425):

1. The word used for "shepherd" in 1:1 is not the usual word rō'eh, but the unusual word nōqēd (דְּנְקֵד), which refers to a "sheep-raiser, -dealer, or -tender" (BDB 667a). The only other occurrence of this word is in 2 Kings 3:4 where it describes Mesha, king of Moab, who raised 100,000 sheep and 100,000 rams. Thus, as a sheep breeder, "Amos evidently managed or owned large herds of sheep and goats, and was in charge of other shepherds" (BKC, 1:1425).

2. Similarly, "herdsman" (רָגֵר bōqēr; 7:14) appears only here in the Old Testament and refers to a "herdsman" (BDB 133c) who oversaw livestock operations much like a cattleman.

3. Finally, since sycamore figs did not grow in Tekoa, but only in the warmer lowlands in western Judah (1 Kings 10:27), it is possible that Amos supervised the taking care of these trees as a seasonal sideline.

At any rate, Amos himself admitted to not being a prophet by occupation or having the training of a prophet in the prophetical schools as a "son of a prophet" (7:14-15).

III. Circumstances

A. Date: Two powerful and long-lived kings ruled the divided kingdom while he prophesied for a short time (1:1). Jeroboam II, king of Israel (793-753 BC including co-regency, or 782-753 BC alone), ruled forty-one years in the north and Uzziah (Azariah) ruled Judah fifty-two years in the south (790-739 BC including co-regency, or 767-750 BC alone). The overlapping reigns of these kings leaves us with a date of composition between 767-753 BC—only about forty years before the northern tribes were taken into captivity by Assyria (LaSor, 320). Astronomical calculations note that a solar eclipse occurred in Israel on June 15, 763 BC—an event perhaps fresh in the minds of Amos’ hearers (8:9; TTTB, 245).

B. Recipients: Amos had the dubious missionary challenge of leaving Judah to prophesy in Israel. Therefore, his message was unpopular, his nationality was foreign, and his credentials considered suspect since he was a common man made prophet (7:14).

C. Occasion: Amos prophesied during a pre-exilic time of tremendous optimism. Due to Assyria's pressure upon Syria and the battle between Damascus and Hamath over control of their area, Israel had extended its borders to the original extent enjoyed under David and Solomon (2 Kings 14:25). Judah had also conquered the Philistines, Arabians, and Ammonites. During these years, Assyria, Babylonia, Syria and Egypt all had weak influence, which made it difficult for the hearers of Amos' message to envision disaster from enemies in the near future.

This political peace brought false religious worship (3:14; 5:4-5, 21-23; 7:9; 9:1-4), great material prosperity (3:15; 4:1; 6:1, 4-6), and international trade, resulting in greed, injustice, neglect of the poor, and finally persecution of the poor (5:11-15; 6:4-7; 8:4; cf. LaSor, 321). Thus God raised up Amos to speak out against the religious and moral evils of his day in the northern kingdom so that justice could "roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream" (5:24).
IV. Characteristics

A. Most of the book is negative, with all but the last eight verses speaking of judgment. This gives it the highest judgment/blessing ratio of the prophetic books.

B. Amos was likely the only businessman to write Scripture, preaching blunt, pointed sermons and picturesque sign language that uses everyday objects.

Argument

The Book of Amos begins with seven judgments upon the nations surrounding Israel as well as Israel itself (chs. 1–2), followed by three sermons against Israel’s injustices (chs. 3–6), illustrated through five visions of judgment (7:1–9:7), and concluding with eight verses of hope in restoration (9:8-15). His purpose for declaring judgment upon Israel for its social injustices is to motivate the nation to repent since God is committed to the Abrahamic Covenant.

Synthesis

Judgment for social injustices

1–2  
1:1-2  Judgments  
1:3–2:5  Nations indicted for sins against Israel  
2:6-16  Israel indicted for sins against itself

3–6  Sermons  
3  Ignorance of doing right  
4  Exploitation/formalism  
5–6  Exile for violations

7:1–9:7  Visions  
7:1-3  Locusts  
7:4-6  Fire  
7:7-9  Plumb line  
7:10-17  (Historical interlude: Amaziah opposes Amos)  
8  Ripe fruit  
9:1-7  Smashed pillars

9:8-15  Restoration  
9:8-10  Remnant  
9:11-15  Complete renewal

Outline

Summary Statement for the Book
Amos’ message of judgment upon social injustices of Israel and the surrounding nations warns of the coming exile and declares God’s promise to restore a remnant in faithfulness to the Abrahamic Covenant to urge the nation to repent.

I. God would judge injustice in Israel (Amos 1:1–9:7).

A. Eight warnings show God would soon judge seven neighbor nations and Israel (Amos 1–2).

1. Amos composes the message of judgment upon Israel about four decades before its fulfillment as proof that the nation had plenty of time to repent (1:1-2).

   a) The author, Amos, notes he was a shepherd from Tekoa to strengthen his message by showing God’s special choice of him as one who was not a professional prophet (1:1a).
b) Amos prophesies two years before a great earthquake (in 760 BC?; Zech. 14:5) while the reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah overlapped (767-753 BC) to show that Israel had nearly four decades to repent before these judgments took place (722 BC; 1:1b).

c) Amos' theme is that God, like a roaring lion and thunder, will devastate Israel (1:2).

2. God would soon judge seven surrounding nations and Israel itself that it might realize that God will punish sin regardless of nationality (1:3–2:16).

   a) Godindicts nations surrounding Israel for sins against Israel, moving closer to Israel in each indictment that the nation might realize its greater responsibility before God and understand God's just punishment (1:3–2:5; see p. 591 and locations on p. 444).

      Structural Marker: "This is what the LORD says" (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4)

      (1) Godindicts Aram, Israel's bitter enemy, for opposing Transjordan Israel so that Israel might know that God will punish this unrelated nation (1:3-5).

      (2) Godindicts Philistia, Israel's bitter enemy, for selling Israel into slavery so that Israel might know that God will punish this unrelated nation (1:6-8).

      (3) Godindicts Tyre, a former ally of Israel (1 Kings 5), for selling Israel into slavery and breaking its covenant of brotherhood so that Israel might know that God will punish this unrelated nation (1:9-10).

      (4) Godindicts Edom, blood relatives through Esau yet enemies of Israel, for persistent hostility towards Israel so that Israel might know that God will punish this "brother" nation (1:11-12).

      (5) Godindicts Ammon, blood relatives through Lot yet Israel's enemies, for taking Transjordan Israel's land by killing pregnant women so that Israel might know that God will punish this "cousin" nation (1:13-15).

      (6) Godindicts Moab, blood relatives through Lot yet Israel's enemies, for mistreating Edom so that Israel might know that God will punish this "cousin" nation (2:1-3).

      (7) Godindicts Judah, Israel's closest relations through Jacob, for rejecting the law of God even in its privileged position, so that Israel might know that God will justly punish this nearest nation by blood (2:4-5).

b) God's longest indictment is against Israel itself for rejecting His grace for sins against itself in social injustices even though it had much revelation (2:6-16).

      (1) Israel broke the covenant and got involved in injustice, materialism, oppression of the poor, sexual immorality, and ritualistic worship (2:6-8).

      (2) Israel rejected God's grace revealed in His clearing the Amorites from them, delivering them from Egypt and sending prophets and Nazirites to them (2:9-12).

      (3) Israel will be punished so it will realize that God keeps His word (2:13-16).

B. Three sermons of judgment show God's righteous reasons for judging Israel (Amos 3-6).

      Structural Marker: "Hear this word" (3:1; 4:1; 5:1)

1. Judgment will come on Israel because, although a chosen people, they still did not know how to do right (Ch. 3).

   a) Israel deserves judgment for being a nation privileged with redemption from Egypt and blessed with prophets, yet still does not know how to do what is right (3:1-10).

      (1) Israel will receive a more strict judgment than the other nations because God redeemed the people from Egypt and gave them a chosen status (3:1-2).
As certain events in ordinary life are always associated, so Israel's judgment is inevitable and must be spoken by God's prophets (3:3-8).

God calls pagans to see Israel's destruction for not knowing how to do right (3:9-10).

b) Israel's judgment will leave only a remnant among destroyed fortresses, pagan altars, and beautiful homes to show God's displeasure with the nation but simultaneous commitment to the Abrahamic Covenant (3:11-15).

(1) God will use an enemy to destroy the strongholds and fortresses (3:11).

(2) Only a remnant will be saved in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant (3:12).

(3) God will destroy the pagan altars and beautiful homes because of His displeasure with the nation's idolatry and materialism (3:13-15).

Judgment will come on the rich women of Bashan for exploiting the poor while involved in ritual formalism and upon all Israel for refusing God's warnings to repent (Ch. 4).

a) Judgment is coming upon the rich women of the region of Bashan because they exploit the poor to satisfy their expensive tastes (4:1-3).

b) God sarcastically invites these rich women to heap up more sins of religious ritualism without proper deeds (4:4-5).

c) God had already sent many judgments to motivate the nation to repent, but the people persisted in their sin and thus proved God's righteous judgment (4:6-13).

(1) God sent famine but Israel would not repent (4:6).

(2) God sent drought but Israel would not repent (4:7-8).

(3) God sent crop failure but Israel would not repent (4:9).

(4) God sent plagues but Israel would not repent (4:10).

(5) God devastated some cities but Israel would not repent (4:11).

(6) God's coming judgment is fair because Israel would not repent (4:12-13).

Exile and death will hit Israel for its idolatry, religious ritual, and refusal to repent (Chs. 5–6).

a) Amos sings God's funeral song about Israel's exile with a ninety percent mortality rate in war to alert the people that soon most of them would be dead (5:1-3).

b) God warns the people to turn from cult centers to seek Him as sovereign, Creator God (5:4-9).

c) God warns the people to turn from their legal injustices to seek Him as the LORD God Almighty (5:10-15).

d) God warns that the impending judgment and exile will be a time of mourning for the secure and prideful nation (5:16-6:14).

(1) The deliverance associated with the Day of the LORD will be accompanied by mourning, darkness, and judgment (5:16-20).

(2) God will exile the nation and turn a deaf ear towards its religious ritual accompanied by idolatry (5:21-27).
The cities of Calneh, Hamath, and Gaza all were defeated even though they were larger and better defended than Samaria so Israel's wealthy men should not feel secure and arrogant (6:1-7).

God will so utterly destroy the nation for its arrogance that even those who survive will fear mentioning God's name lest He hear and strike them too (6:8-11).

Because Israel in its pride perverts justice, God promises to stir up Assyria [not mentioned by name] to oppress them (6:12-14).

C. Five visions of the coming judgments on Israel inform the people that they can avoid them by repenting (7:1-9:7).

Structural Marker: "This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me" (7:1, 4, 7; 8:1)

1. In the vision of the locusts God shows His desire to strip the land bare so that Israel would die from famine, but He will not actually do it in fulfillment of His Covenant (7:1-3).
   a) In a vision God shows Amos His desire to strip the land bare with locusts (7:1).
   b) Since Israel would die from famine had the locusts eaten up the crop, God relents from destroying the nation because of the Abrahamic Covenant (7:2-3).

2. In the vision of the fire God shows His desire to burn the entire nation, but He will not actually do it in fulfillment of His Covenant (7:4-6).
   a) In a vision God shows Amos His desire to destroy the nation with fire (7:4).
   b) Since the fire would destroy the entire nation, God relents from this act because of the Abrahamic Covenant (7:5-6).

3. In the vision of the plumb line God illustrates how the nation is morally crooked compared to His absolute standards, so He will destroy the people and the altars (7:7-9).
   a) In a vision God shows Amos a plumb line on a correctly built house (7:7-8a).
   b) The plumb line illustrates how the nation is morally crooked compared to God's absolute standards, so He will destroy the people and the altars (7:8b-9).

4. Amos records a historical interlude in which Amaziah seeks to stop him from prophesying, thus revealing how even religious Israel refused to hear his message (7:10-17).
   a) Amaziah the priest accuses Amos before King Jeroboam II with disturbing the peace and forbids him to prophesy to show that even religious leaders rejected his message (7:10-13).
   b) Amos defends his right to prophesy and prophesies judgment on Amaziah (7:14-17).
      (1) Amos responds by saying he prophesies only because God told him to do it—not because he is a professional prophet (7:14-15).
      (2) Amos prophesies judgment against Amaziah's wife, children, land, life, and nation (7:16-17).

5. In the vision of the ripe fruit God relates that the nation's end would soon come in judgment for disregarding social and religious duties (Ch. 8).
   a) In the vision of the ripe fruit God relates that Israel would soon end as a nation (8:1-3).
   b) The reason for the judgment is because of Israel's disregard for the poor, the New Moon festival, the Sabbath, and fair business practices (8:4-6).
   c) Israel will be severely judged in its land, sky, and religious feasts (8:7-10).
d) Israel will be severely judged with no more prophetic words from God (8:11-14).

6. In a vision of the smashed pillars the Almighty God declares that He will destroy Israel's religious system as He did any other disobedient land (9:1-7).
   a) God declares that He will destroy the pagan religious system so that His name will not be profaned any longer (9:1-4).
   b) The Almighty God will judge Israel as He will any other disobedient foreign power (9:5-7).

II. God's promises to restore a remnant of Israel to encourage Israel with His commitment to the Abrahamic Covenant (9:8-15).

A. God declares that He will not totally destroy Israel but would leave a remnant due to His loyalty to the Davidic Covenant (9:8-10).

B. God promises to restore Israel's remnant politically, evangelistically, materially, and geographically due to His loyalty to the Abrahamic Covenant [which will find fulfillment in the kingdom era] (9:11-15).
   1. God promises to restore the Davidic line in a political renewal to fulfill the promise to David that his descendants would remain to rule forever (9:11; cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-16).
   2. God promises to restore Israel to its original evangelistic purpose as a light to the Gentile nations (9:12).
      a) Israel will enjoy material wealth with overflowing crops and wine (9:13).
      b) Israel will once again return to the Promised Land and enjoy its material benefits to fulfill the Land Covenant (9:14-15; cf. Deut. 30:1-10).
Contrasting Hosea and Amos

Israel’s Only Two Prophets

While the southern nation of Judah had at least twelve prophetical books directed towards it, the northern nation of Israel had but two prophets: Hosea and Amos. Both of their writings noted that Israel would experience judgment for abusing its privileged position before God; however, they were different in several ways as well:

<table>
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<th>Hosea</th>
<th>Amos</th>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Prophet (1:1)</td>
<td>Nonprofessional Prophet (7:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National from Israel (7:5)</td>
<td>Missionary from Judah (1:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern: Religious Idolatry (Worship)</td>
<td>Concern: Social Injustice (Walk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel’s Unfaithfulness</td>
<td>Israel’s Injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s Faithfulness</td>
<td>God’s Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s Grace</td>
<td>God’s Righteousness</td>
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<tr>
<td>God’s Loyal Love (Hesed)</td>
<td>God’s Judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic Tone</td>
<td>Stern Tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate (11:1)</td>
<td>Coarse (4:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Structure</td>
<td>Simple Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel Lacks Knowledge</td>
<td>Israel Lacks Morality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Know God” (4:1, 6; 6:6)</td>
<td>“Seek God” (5:4, 6)</td>
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## Eight Nations Denounced by Amos (Amos 1–6)

*Wilmingtons Guide to the Bible*

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<tr>
<th>NATION</th>
<th>CRIME</th>
<th>PUNISHMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SYRIA</td>
<td>Had often harassed</td>
<td>◦ The capital at Damascus to be burned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>◦ Their strongholds to be broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1:1-5)</td>
<td>◦ Their citizens to be enslaved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHILISTIA</td>
<td>Had sold Israelites</td>
<td>◦ The burning of their four main cities: Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron</td>
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<td></td>
<td>into slavery to Edom</td>
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<td>PHOENICIA</td>
<td>Had broken their peace</td>
<td>◦ The burning down of the forts and palaces in Tyre, their chief city.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>covenant with Israel</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDOM</td>
<td>Had murdered many Jews</td>
<td>◦ The destruction of their cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1:11, 12)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AMMON</td>
<td>Had murdered Jewish</td>
<td>◦ Their cities to be burned</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>women</td>
<td>◦ Their citizens to be enslaved</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1:13-15)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOAB</td>
<td>Had desecrated the</td>
<td>◦ They would be defeated in battle</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tombs of the dead</td>
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<td>JUDAH</td>
<td>Had rejected the word</td>
<td>◦ Their Temple in Jerusalem to be destroyed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of God</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Had disobeyed the God</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of the Word</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2:4, 5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISRAEL</td>
<td>Had accepted bribes</td>
<td>◦ Their punishment would make them groan as a loaded-down wagon</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(2:6-16)</td>
<td>◦ Their armies would stumble in battle</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Had enslaved the poor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Had committed adultery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Had stolen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Were totally unthankful</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Had caused the innocent to sin</td>
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Additional indictments upon the whole house of Israel — both southern and northern kingdoms (3-6)
Perils of Prosperity
Israel's Prophets Under Jeroboam II

The reign of Jeroboam II in Israel (793-753 BC) was the wealthiest time of the northern kingdom. Due in part to the weakness of Assyria in decline to the northeast, Israel's boundaries expanded nearly to the dimensions of the golden era of the united kingdom of David and Solomon (prophesied by Jonah in 2 Kings 14:25).

Yet this prosperity brought with it problems as well, so God sent three prophets to this godless, wealthy, oppressive nation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jonah</th>
<th>Amos</th>
<th>Hosea</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Evangelistic</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addressed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Israel's</td>
<td>Myopia</td>
<td>Injustice</td>
<td>Adultery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>God's Attribute</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Faithfulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Word</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Injustice</td>
<td>Loyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>God cares</td>
<td>God is fair</td>
<td>God keeps</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>even for cruel</td>
<td>with you, so you</td>
<td>His</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gentiles, so you</td>
<td>should be fair with</td>
<td>covenant with you,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>should care too!</td>
<td>others!</td>
<td>so be faithful to</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Him as well!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Parallels</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Oppression</td>
<td>Church's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Mission Responsibility</td>
<td>of Maids &amp; Foreign Workers</td>
<td>God is Modernity (Methods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Ministry (approx.)</td>
<td>785-758</td>
<td>767-753</td>
<td>755-710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beginning of Jeroboam’s reign</td>
<td>Middle of Jeroboam’s reign</td>
<td>End of Jeroboam’s reign</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Use of Amos 9 in Acts 15

The final verses of Amos’ prophecy (9:11-12) provide hope for restoration to Israel after discipline by the Lord. In fact, reference is made to both a restoration of the Davidic reign and expansion of the nation’s borders to include land as far southeast as Edom.

This text from Amos was used by James in the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15:16-17 to argue for an inclusion of Gentiles in the church without need for circumcision. Yet notable differences remain between the two, as James does not quote Amos exactly.

Amos 9:11-12

“In that day I will restore David’s fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name,’ declares the LORD, who will do these things.”

Acts 15:16-17

“After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things’

“Edom” (Echo) is Hebrew (Masoretic Text with vowel pointing ובנון that was not added until the eighth century AD. Yet in Amos’ time without the vowels the same word could be read either as “Edom” or “mankind” (also Echo). In Acts 15 James quoted it as “mankind.” A similar problem occurs between “possess” (しゃיו) and “seek” (סאם) that are only different by one consonant.

For interpretive problems such as the claim that the church is being referred to here, see the supplement to the book of Acts in my New Testament Survey. Also, note the following from Donald R. Sunukjian, “Amos,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, 1:1451.