

# Amos, a Herdsman Called of God to Be a Prophet

**Lesson Scripture:** Amos 1:1; 2:11-12; 3:7-8; 7:10-15

**Focus Scripture:** Amos 1:1; 2:11-12; 3:7-8; 7:10-15

*Key Verse: "The Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'" Amos 7:15*

AMOS 1:1; 2:11-12; 3:7-8; 7:10-15 (NRSV UE)

## Amos 1:1

1 The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of King Uzziah of Judah and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

## 2:11-12

11 And I raised up some of your children to be prophets and some of your youths to be nazirites. Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel? says the Lord.

12 But you made the nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets, saying, "You shall not prophesy."

## 3:7-8

7 Surely the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.

8 The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?

## 7:10-15

10 Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words.

11 For thus Amos has said, 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land.'

12 And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there,

13 but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it

AMOS 1:1; 2:11-12; 3:7-8; 7:10-15 (KJV)

## Amos 1:1

1 The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

## 2:11-12

11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord.

12 But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not.

## 3:7-8

7 Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

## 7:10-15

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

11 For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:

13 But prophesy not again any more at Bethel:

is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.”

14 Then Amos answered Amaziah, “I am no prophet nor a prophet’s son, but I am a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees,

15 and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”

for it is the king’s chapel, and it is the king’s court.

14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit:

15 And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

**Key Terms**

- **Sovereign Lord** – A term that highlights God’s almighty position and authority over all other gods or authorities.
- **Atrocities** – An extremely evil event causing widespread suffering and death.
- **Tension** – A situation causing worry or stress; a worrying conflict.

not always well received by persons in positions of authority. So, carrying God’s messages to them can be risky.

Yet even when the reception to the message is hostile, the messenger must stand his ground and rely on the God who called him to fashion the outcome in every threatening situation. In this lesson, follow how well a job Amos did in witnessing for the God of Israel.



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**Introduction**

In this lesson, we focus on Amos’ multiple witnesses of what God does through people. Firstly, both in ancient Israel and even today, God has a habit of bypassing the highly trained officials and choosing ordinary, humble people to carry his messages to the nation. And as we know only too well, God’s messages are

**Telling the Bible Story**

The message that God called Amos to take to the religious elite in Israel was a hard message. It accused them of approving false worship and validating political and economic systems that exploited the poor and vulnerable. Pushback against Amos was certain.

Amos’ reference to God as “Sovereign

Lord” is noteworthy. Bear in mind Amos addressed the leaders – the rulers in religion and general society. The use of the term “Sovereign God” reflects that he was representing the God – the ultimate king – who reigns above all other kings, rulers, and authorities. This would give his messages the authority to supersede all the pronouncements, rules, and customs of anyone on earth. Note Amos 3:7, 5:14-15, 7:1, 7:4, and 9:1.

The animosity between Amaziah and Amos had different aspects. Amaziah is a priest, and Amos is a prophet. It would be reasonable to expect them to be on the same mission of representing truth and reflecting God’s will. But that is not the case. What we see instead is a clash between religious authority and prophetic authority. Amaziah was obviously interested in maintaining the king’s favor and the status quo. Amos was conveying God’s current concerns.

And yes, we still see this today, where religious authorities pander to political

favor rather than stand boldly to say “Thus says the Lord” when God’s message is not politically comfortable.

Also note where Amaziah exaggerates and lies about Amos at verse 7:11. What Amos actually predicted was at 7:9. Therefore, Amaziah was overstating the charge to enrage the king against Amos. Again, this is a tactic still seen by leaders or wannabe leaders seeking political favor. Thankfully, Amos had a clear sense of who he was and whose agenda he was to follow (Amos 7:14-15).

### Sankofa

Maybe we don’t call him a prophet, but Frederick Douglass spoke with the same prophetic voice of Amos on the issue of slavery. And just as Amos came

under attack from the Amaziah’s of his day, Douglass’ position was contrary to the American church at that time, which quoted scripture to justify the practice of slavery, including its atrocities.


Throughout the centuries, there were always church officials with vested

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interests in defending the status quo of societies. Their motivation is always to protect their own interests and the politically empowered groups, rather than the general population. So, we thank God for people like Frederick Douglass who find the courage and voice to lift up a standard against injustice in societies. Many of them sacrifice popularity and risk their lives for what they were sure God wants.

### Case Study

To get a sense of what the tension between Amos (the prophet) and Amaziah (the political priest) was like, please study Frederick Douglass' speech, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" of July 5, 1852. Note his criticism of the church's support of slavery. "Of all the hideous monsters in the world none is more dreadful than the religious slaveholder." You read that and your sense of justice says "Ouch!" And again, he said, "The slave auctioneer's bell and the church-going bell chime in with each other." The church, which



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should be against social injustice and exploitation, is walking and holding hands with state-sponsored cruelty. One wonders about the theological tenets that made leaders in the established churches so comfortable with slavery's inhumanity.

Take some time to read the speech in full. Space does not permit us to give much more here. But as you read it, don't just

hear the words. Feel the passion that raged against the church that defended the practice of inhuman slavery. You may not get it from a casual reading of the book of Amos. But this must be the same passion with which Amos challenged the abuses of his day.

### Life Application

As you look around the current society, what do you see entrenched in the way we live that lights righteous anger in you? We are sure you have your list. But let me share one with you that most probably is not on your list. There is a concern about how willingly we allow those in commercial and political power to confuse us about who we are,

our family structure and relations, and our appreciation of the things that are culturally and religiously sacred to us.

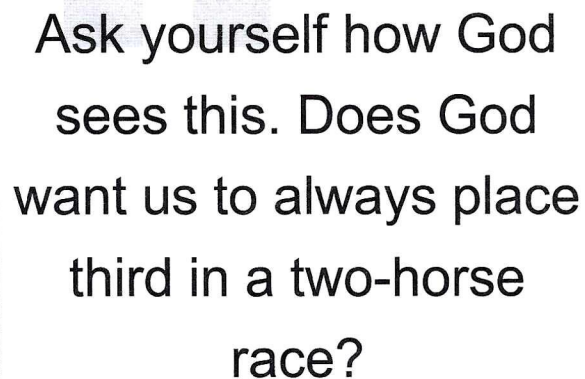
The advertising tells us we cannot like our hair unless it conforms to the advertised standards. Naturally, they are ready to sell us the right things we must be proud of. Subtly, we are pushed to be engaged in gender wars, which do irreparable damage to our family structure and leave our young men vulnerable to the elaborate, profitable prison industry. Even our theology at times glorifies a few at the expense of the many. And just as in the days of Amos and the times of Douglass, all these things are legal and acceptable.

As a people, we seem not to be moving forward despite our many efforts. Other people groups are moving forward, while we stand marching joyfully at the same spot. We only get the political participation we are allowed, and enough of the economic pie to stop us from starving. Ask yourself

how God sees this. Does God want us to always place third in a two-horse race? What is the Holy Spirit saying to you on these matters of politics, economics, and social justice?

### Questions

1. How can you know when a prophetic word is really from God?
2. What injustices do you see in the present society, and how can we address them?
3. As a Christian, what can you contribute to building a more just society for the masses?



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### Closing Devotions

**Closing Hymn:** "Oh

God of Earth and Altar"

**Closing Prayer:** Dear Father, guide me to hear your words of justice and help me to live them, even when they make me or those around me uncomfortable. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS****June 29–July 5**

<b>Monday</b>	Isaiah 49:1-6 (A Light to the Nations)
<b>Tuesday</b>	Psalms 72:1-13 (May All Nations Serve the Lord)
<b>Wednesday</b>	Ephesians 2:1-10 (God Makes Us Alive Through Christ)
<b>Thursday</b>	Ephesians 2:11-22 (Strangers Brought Near Through Christ)
<b>Friday</b>	Isaiah 60:1-8 (Arise, Shine; Your Light Has Come)
<b>Saturday</b>	Isaiah 60:9-14 (The Coastlands Await God's Light)
<b>Sunday</b>	Matthew 8:5-13 (A Banquet Spread for All)