

Amos Chapter 6

Verses 1-2: The two capitals of Judah and Israel, Zion and Samaria, were invited to look around. If Calneh (possibly the Calno of Isa. 10:9), and Hamath (Syria), and Gath (Philistia), could not put off judgment, how could they?

The people were enjoying a life of “ease”, but Amos seeks to disrupt their complacency by again prefacing his message with “woe”, a word that would have stirred up images of death in the minds of his audience (Luke 6:24).

Amos 6:1 "Woe to them [that are] at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, [which are] named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!"

"Woe To them that are at ease": This comprised many and great sorrows, all that God intends against these sinners. Who live in abundance, eat, drink, sleep, and are secure. That think tomorrow shall be as this day; and neither fear nor believe the threatened judgments of God. Zion, by a word put for the kingdom of the two tribes, and principally the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Zion; the ten tribes were therefore threatened. Now the prophet warns the two tribes.

"And trust in the mountain of Samaria": Woe to them also who rely upon the strength, wealth, and policy of the king, princes, cities, and kingdom of Samaria or Israel!

"Which are named chief of the nations": Which two cities, Zion and Samaria. Accounted chief cities among the known cities of that part of the world. Others refer this passage to the nobles, wise men and great men of each place; men that were heads among their own people.

"To whom the house of Israel came": To which places all Israel had recourse; so the two tribes went up to Zion, the ten tribes went to Samaria. Or, to whom, i.e. to which nobles and rulers, the people of each kingdom did go on all occasions for judgment, counsel or refuge.

They were living in an affluent time and also felt that they were secure. They were doing things pleasing in their own sight. Samaria seemed to be perfectly safe, where no one would dare attack them. The very first word in the warning above is “woe”. This is a warning that things will change for the worse. "Zion" speaks spiritually of the church. The church is dwelling at ease today. It is a dangerous thing to get satisfied with self.

Amos 6:2 "Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: [be they] better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?"

Pass over to Calneh - He bids them behold, east, north, and west, survey three neighboring kingdoms, and see whether God had not, even in the gifts of this world, dealt better with Israel. Why then so requite Him? "Calneh" (which Isaiah calls "Calno" Isaiah 10:9, Ezekiel, "Canneh

Ezekiel 27:23), was one of the four cities, built by Nimrod "in the land of Shinar (Genesis 10:10, at the beginning of his kingdom.)"

“Go ye to Hamath the great”: A city of Syria, on the Orontes. It was conquered by Jeroboam (2 Kings 14:25); and by the Assyrians (2 Kings 19:34). Called here Hamath the great to distinguish it from Hemath, mentioned in (Amos 6:14), which was the northern boundary of Palestine.

“Then go down to Gath”: This city was taken by Uzziah, in whose reign Amos prophesied (2 Chron. 26:6).

“Be they better than these kingdoms?” The kingdoms of Judah and Israel? The answer seems to be yes, they were better.

“Their border greater than your border”: So that they had more reason to be confident of their safety than you have; yet you see what is become of them, and dare you be secure? Thus Nahum asks Nineveh (Nahum 3:8,)

God invites them to go and compare the countries around them and see that God has blessed them far above their neighbors. Calneh is one of the five great Babylonian cities. It is an ancient city pertaining to Nimrod's kingdom. This specific mention of Calneh may be speaking of modern Kullanhu. Hamath was the principle city of Syria and Gath is a Philistine city. They were great cities, but not as blessed as Samaria.

Amos 6:3 "Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;"

They choose to think that the day of reckoning is far off, and cling yet closer to their habits of defrauding the poor at the seat of judgment (Ezekiel 12:21-28).

"And cause the seat of violence to come near": Boldly venture upon the commission of acts of injustice, seizure, and violence, on a presumption the evil day threatened will never come. Or place themselves on the bench in courts of justice and there, without any manner of concern. Commit the greatest acts of unrighteousness, as believing they shall never be called to an account for them by God or man.

Wickedness and oppression ruled in their land as if they were king. They did not feel that the judgment Amos spoke of was near. They felt it was somewhere in the far distant future, when in fact, it was to happen very soon.

Amos 6:4 "That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;"

That lie upon beds (that is, sofas), that is probably inlaid with ivory. The word might, in itself, express either the bed, in which they slept by night, or the divan, on which the Easterners lay at their meals. "And stretch themselves," literally, "are poured" out, stretching their listless length, dissolved, unnerved, in luxury and sloth, "upon their couches," perhaps under an awning.

"And eat the lambs," probably fattened lambs (as in Deuteronomy 32:14; Psalm 37:20; 1 Samuel 15:9; Jeremiah 51:40).

"Out of the flock": Chosen, selected out of it as the best, and "calves out of the midst of the stall;" that is, the place where they were tied up (as the word means), to be fattened. They were stall-fed, as we say, and these people had the best chosen for them.

They were living in luxury. These beds seemed to have ivory inlay in them. Stretching themselves on their couch makes them appear to be lazy, they are indulging themselves with every pleasure. This speaks of a people who are pampering and petting themselves. They are eating the lambs and the calves. This speaks of someone who lies around doing nothing except stuffing themselves. They indulged themselves in every way.

Amos 6:5 "That chant to the sound of the viol, [and] invent to themselves instruments of music, like David;"

"Chant to the sound of the viol ... like David": They displayed a genius and creativity similar to that of King David, but with one great difference: David's music was inspired by God and directed man's heart to praise Him. Their music turned a man's heart away from God to their own lusts.

Chanting is not the same thing as singing songs of praise to God. This could be worldly songs they are singing just to pass the time, or it could be chants made to a false god. They have turned the use of the beautiful instruments of music to instruments used for the wrong purpose. David used His instruments of music to worship and praise God. That is not the purpose of the instruments of music these people were using, this was part of their self-indulgence.

Amos 6:6 "That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."

"Drink wine in bowls": These large bowls, usually used for sacrificial purposes, here typify the excesses of their lifestyle.

As if lying around eating and singing idle songs are not enough, they drink along with it. The "drinking wine in bowls" had to do with the worship of false gods. I believe the chanting was to false gods as well. They used the beautiful perfume for themselves. They are not even interested in the coming fall of the ten tribes of Israel. First of all, they did not even believe it would happen.

Amos 6:7 "Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed."

The punishment fits the crime. Those who thought of themselves as more important than others (6:1), and demanded the very best oil for themselves (6:6), would be at the head of the line ("the first of the captives"), when the enemy took the nation into exile.

They will go into captivity even before Judah and Jerusalem. In the very first of the captives, these who have indulged themselves will be taken. There will be no more banquets for them.

Amos 6:8 "The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein."

“Sworn by himself” (Genesis 22:16; Hebrews 6:13-14).

They had become something that God did not like. He did not bless them for them to oppress others. He intended for all of His people to be blessed, not just those in power. God swears by Himself, because there is no greater to swear by. This punishment will come upon them, because God has spoken it. God will break the arrogant attitude of Israel. They have put their confidence in things rather than in God.

Verses 9-10: The judgment was so comprehensive that even small remnants were sought out and killed.

Amos 6:9 "And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die."

The thing is decreed, and shall take effect.

“If there remain”: Or escape the enemies’ sword, or the famine of Samaria, besieged three years.

“Ten men in one house”: If as many as ten (Lev. 26:26; Zech. 8:23), remain in a house (a rare case), and only in the scattered villages, as there will be scarcely a house in which the enemy will leave any.

“That they shall die”: Either of pestilence or by some other stroke of God’s hand; though they escape a while they shall not finally escape (2 Kings 17:5).

This is probably speaking of the ten men living in luxury. If they are not killed by war they will be killed by a famine.

Amos 6:10 "And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that [is] by the sides of the house, [Is there] yet [any] with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD."

“A man’s uncle”: Or undertaker, literally “one who burns him.” This could refer to cremation, demanded by the excessive number killed and because of fear of epidemics. With rare exceptions (1 Sam. 31:12), corpses were buried in ancient Israel.

“Not make mention of the name of the Lord”: Previously welcomed as a friend, the Lord came in judgment as a foe; survivors would not want to invoke His name out of fear.

We see in this the terribleness of the siege on Samaria as it lasts for 3 years. The uncle here, is speaking of the near kinsman that comes to bury the body of the deceased. There are so many dead that they burn them, instead of putting them in graves. They cannot call upon the name of the LORD, because His judgment has already come.

Amos 6:11 "For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts."

Consider this well: it seems to be the continued speech of him who took care of the dead (Amos 6:10).

"And he will smite the great house with breaches": Or "droppings"; so that the rain shall drop through.

"And the little house with clefts": So that it shall fall to ruin; that is, he shall smite the houses both of great and small. Of the princes, and of the common people, either with an earthquake, so that they shall part asunder and fall; or, being left without inhabitants, shall of course become desolate, there being none to repair their breaches.

Some understand, by the "great house", the ten tribes of Israel; and, by the "little house", the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

The futility of praying now is what was spoken of in the previous verse. Whatever God commands, He does. The houses will be destroyed.

Verses 12-14: Amos offers a pair of ridiculous rhetorical questions, “Horses” trying to “run” on rock walls and farmers trying to “plow” a rocky cliff, to illustrate how unnatural and unsustainable Israel’s views of justice were. Because Israel relied too much on its military strength and too little on God, they would lose the cities they had overtaken.

Amos 6:12 "Shall horses run upon the rock? will [one] plow [there] with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:"

“Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen?” The two questions are rhetorical and demand a negative answer. Horses do not run on rocks, or else they would become lame; nor does one plow rocks with oxen, or else the plow would be broken. To violate natural law is to reap the consequences of it. Even more, Israel’s folly in transgressing God’s law will bring certain judgment.

Israel’s exercise of justice was as absurd as running horses on rocks or plowing rocks with oxen.

Horses cannot walk very fast on rock strewn roads. The oxen cannot plow a field full of rocks either. They have turned judgment into bitterness. This is just an explanation of the foolish things they had done. Hemlock is the same as wormwood. Their righteousness was as filthy rags. Their righteousness was polluted.

Amos 6:13 "Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?"

This sarcastically points out that Israel's "great" gain will amount to nothing. The "horns", Israel foolishly believed they had conquered in their own strength.

They had rejoiced in the unimportant things of this world. They were not depending on God's strength but upon their own strength (horns). They could not depend upon themselves.

Amos 6:14 "But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness."

The Assyrian nation, under its king, Shalmaneser; who invaded Israel, came up to Samaria, and after a three years' siege took it, and carried Israel captive into foreign lands (2 Kings 17:5).

"And they shall afflict you": By battles, sieges, forages, plunders, and burning of cities and towns, and putting the inhabitants to the sword.

"From the entering in of Hemath": A city of Syria bordering on the land of Israel north-east, and was an inlet into Syria from the north of Canaan.

"Unto the river of the wilderness": This is Sichor, in the most southwest parts of Canaan towards Egypt. So all your country, Judah, and all shall be oppressed by that nation which I will raise and strengthen against you.

This is speaking of the Assyrians coming against Israel. The Assyrians do the fighting, but it is actually judgment of God against these people. This just means the whole land is under attack.

Amos Chapter 6 Questions

1. Woe to them that are at ease in _____.
2. What was named chief among nations?
3. What does "Zion" speak of spiritually?
4. Why did God invite them to compare themselves to their neighbors?
5. Calneh is one of five great _____ cities.

6. Hamath was the principle city of _____.
7. Gath is a _____ city.
8. _____ and _____ ruled in their land.
9. Why did they not take more heed to Amos?
10. That lie upon beds of _____.
11. They were living in _____.
12. Stretching themselves on their couch makes them appear to be _____.
13. What is the chanting in verse 5?
14. What had David used his instruments of music for?
15. "The drinking wine in bowls" had to do with what?
16. What will happen to these self-indulgent people?
17. Why does God swear by Himself?
18. Where had Israel placed their confidence?
19. What does verse 10 show us?
20. How long did the siege last on Samaria?
21. Why did the near kinsman burn their bodies?
22. What is intended by "shall the horses run upon the rock?"
23. Hemlock is the same as _____.
24. Their righteousness was as _____ _____.
25. Whose strength were they depending on?
26. Who is the nation God raises up against them?