

Discipleship Group Weekly Resources

Week 3

Passage: Amos 3

Big Thought:

Amos now has the prophetic crosshairs fixed on Israel as a whole. They have done evil before God and there is judgement coming. The next two chapters are going to be a divine exposure of Israel's guilt. Chapter 3 begins by calling the entire nation to account (v. 1-8), moves on to concentrate attention on the capital city (v. 9-12), and points accusation even more specifically at the sanctuary at Bethel and the royal house (v. 13-15). Let's walk through this:

3:1-6 – The people of God are commanded to hear this word. Their unique status as God's chosen people meant they were solely responsible for the evil carried out in the nation. Just because they are God's people doesn't mean they are free from consequences for evil. Just because they sacrifice the right way at the right times does not give them a "get-out-of-jail-free" card. Actions have inevitable consequences (v. 3-6).

3:7-11 – God reveals His plans to His prophets and Amos knows what God plans to do therefore he is a prophet. In judgement, God is a devouring lion. This is a rhetorical call for Ashdod and Egypt to witness the wrongs of Samaria, the capital of Israel, whose fortresses are full of stolen goods gained from oppression. The evil of God's people will surprise their enemies and those enemies of Israel will overrun the land in judgement and will prove to Israel they have misplaced faith in fortresses.

3:12 – A shepherd of the time was required to present some remains of a sheep to its owner as evidence that he had not stolen or lost the animal, but that a lion had killed it. The point here is either that only a few in Israel will survive the invasion of their enemies or that the northern kingdom will be left with little by the enemies.

3:13-15 – One of the specific targets of judgement is Bethel, where the northern kingdom's most important sanctuary was located. The sanctuary was associated with Jacob's vision in Genesis 28:10-22 and was one of the two religious sites established by Jeroboam I when the northern kingdom separated from Judah (1 Kings 12:25-13:34). A golden calf was placed in each sanctuary, a sin that became the standard of condemnation of the kings of the northern kingdom. Bethel is a focus of judgement because the religious system defended the regime's actions and the society's unjust structures. Those who came to the sanctuaries believed that the Lord had authorized this oppressive kingdom. *God will not tolerate being portrayed as supportive of such injustice.* The horns of the altar were a place of mercy and protection, but for Israel those will be cut off and there would be no escape from divine wrath. Additionally, the fancy houses of the royal family or powerful individuals would be destroyed because they enjoyed the fruit of exploiting the defenseless.

3 Questions:

1. What are two main takeaways from this chapter of Amos?
2. Much of Amos' critiques are against those who faithfully attend the religious gatherings and give offerings to God, all while neglecting the poor and ignoring injustice. Do you feel convicted or challenged by Amos' words of judgement? If yes, what might you do differently in response?
3. What do we learn about God's character in this chapter of Amos?