

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Amos 6:1-14

New Revised Standard Version

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, June 21, 2015

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The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, June 21, 2015**, is from **Amos 6:1-14**. Please Note: Some churches will only study **Amos 6:4-8, 11-14**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. A podcast for this commentary is also available at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Amos 6:1-14

(Amos 6:1) Alas for those who are at ease in Zion, and for those who feel secure on Mount Samaria, the notables of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel resorts!

Amos preached during the reign of King Jeroboam II [786 BC-746 BC], perhaps for only one year, which was all that would be necessary, perhaps because Amaziah told Amos to stop preaching (see Amos 5:10 and Amos 7:10-17). God condemned both Zion (Jerusalem) and Samaria (capital of the Kingdom of Israel) for their pride. At the time of Amos' preaching, both kingdoms were powerful and prosperous compared to their neighboring nations. Israel claimed to be first, above all others, and secure because of their military might and wealth. They trusted in themselves instead of in God.

(Amos 6:2) Cross over to Calneh, and see; from there go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is your territory greater than their territory,

In this verse, Amos most probably was paraphrasing the propaganda of those who ruled Israel in Samaria. They told the people to look to the two northern territories or city-states (Calneh and Hamath) and consider how much better they have made the

Kingdom of Israel. Then, they said that the people could go to Gath, a Philistine city under the control of Jerusalem at that time. They could see how much better “we are” and how much greater “we are” than these places. Of course, the Assyrians would conquer these territories and cities as well as the Kingdom of Israel.

(Amos 6:3) O you that put far away the evil day, and bring near a reign of violence?

The “evil day” is the “day of the LORD” spoken of in the previous chapter. It is a day of judgment and punishment, of darkness and gloom. The proud rulers of Israel and those who had acquired their wealth through immoral and unjust means were refusing to consider that the LORD would hold them accountable for their evil deeds and responsible for their oppression of the poor and needy. They had violently oppressed their own people and stolen their property; therefore, a reign of violence was coming near that would destroy the Kingdom of Israel. Thinking they were much better than their neighbors, the unjust leaders of Israel put away the evil day or refused to think of the coming day of the LORD when God would punish them.

(Amos 6:4) Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the stall;

God did not condemn the wealthy for being wealthy, but He did condemn the wealthy for their ill-gotten gains. Furthermore, these wealthy that God condemned were living in unproductive ease and sleeping on beds with inlaid ivory when others were in need and they were stealing from the needy. They were doing nothing to benefit others morally or spiritually, and they were doing nothing to help the poor and needy materially or spiritually or physically. They ate and enjoyed the best of everything while oppressing the most needy in the nation to acquire more wealth, power, and privilege

(Amos 6:5) who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David improvise on instruments of music;

God condemned the idle rich who reclined, feasted, and enjoyed the luxury of harp and other instrumental music, and who tried to justify their idleness (made possible by stealing from others and bribery in the courts) by pointing to King David who wrote Psalms and played them on a harp. However, King David had worked as a shepherd, soldier, and king to benefit others, and in spite of his sins, he sought to please and serve the LORD rather than oppress God’s people.

(Amos 6:6) who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!

Amos described the indolent, who trusted in their wealth and maintained a false security, who as drunks drank wine by the bowlful; who used the finest oils to soften

their skin and beautify their bodies; who thought only of themselves and their personal prosperity and enjoyment, instead of grieving over the moral and spiritual decline of their nation. Joseph was the most moral and spiritually mature of the sons of Jacob, and the leaders in the Kingdom of Israel had become the exact opposite of this powerful, wise, and wealthy leader over all of Egypt.

(Amos 6:7) Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile, and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.

Because these degenerate rulers and leaders had put themselves first over others, God ordained that they would be the first to go into exile beyond Damascus. Later, in 586 BC, the corrupt leaders and rulers of Judah would be the first to go into exile in Babylon. What Amos foretold happened exactly as God told him to preach. Israel was first to seek sordid gain and the first to go into exile

(Amos 6:8) The Lord GOD has sworn by himself (says the LORD, the God of hosts): I abhor the pride of Jacob and hate his strongholds; and I will deliver up the city and all that is in it.

The LORD cannot swear an oath or pledge to keep a promise on anyone or anything greater than himself. When God swears by himself, He will surely do what He has sworn to do. God hates and is disgusted with the pride of Jacob. God hated Jacob's (Israel's) trust in his military defenses instead of trusting in the LORD. God pledged with His total being that He would deliver the Kingdom of Israel to their enemies: it would not be their enemies that succeeded, but God who succeeded in justly punishing the kingdom.

(Amos 6:9) If ten people remain in one house, they shall die.

Ten people in a house probably indicated a palace or a great home of a noble or wealthy wicked person. God promised that the destruction of Israel would be greater than some of the rulers going in exile, rulers who made themselves first, and who would go into exile first. Rather, many of the most influential and wealthy, who made themselves first, would die at the hands of their enemies.

(Amos 6:10) And if a relative, one who burns the dead, shall take up the body to bring it out of the house, and shall say to someone in the innermost parts of the house, "Is anyone else with you?" the answer will come, "No." Then the relative shall say, "Hush! We must not mention the name of the LORD."

Burning the dead was not a custom in Israel. Elaborate funerals with paid professional mourners followed by the burial of the wealthy would have been the custom. Either so many died from disease and pestilence following the Israelites' defeat in battle that the only recourse was burning them, or the Assyrians demanded that the thousands of

corpses be burned by the Israelites. The time would come when the Israelites would be afraid to say the Lord's name because they recognized His hand in the destruction of their nation.

(Amos 6:11) See, the LORD commands, and the great house shall be shattered to bits, and the little house to pieces.

Only those who obeyed the words of the LORD, “seek me and live” or “seek the Lord and live” (see Amos 5:4, 6, 14) would live, since God would be with them and show them a way of escape or be with them as He led them to live with Abraham and Him. Otherwise, the rich in great houses and the poor in little houses would see their homes “shattered to bits.” God intended for the entire kingdom to be destroyed entirely.

(Amos 6:12) Do horses run on rocks? Does one plow the sea with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood—

No matter what the selfish and self-centered people tried to do to save themselves from the judgment of God, they would fail. They would fail just as a rider would fail if he tried to race his horse up a cliff or through a huge pile of boulders. They would fail just as a farmer would fail if he tried to plow the ocean with his oxen to plant his crops. Likewise, if they did not repent, it was ridiculous for the wicked to think that God would save them from judgment, because whenever the needy sought justice, the selfish gave them the equivalent of poison. They stole from the righteous. Whatever should have resulted from just judgments for those who obeyed the Lord, they twisted and misused so they could trample those who lived godly. The godly received a bitter poison from the godless.

(Amos 6:13) you who rejoice in Lo-debar, who say, “Have we not by our own strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?”

Partly because of weak neighboring nations and a temporarily weakened Assyria, King Jeroboam II had expanded the territory of the Kingdom of Israel. Lo-debar is the name of a location that means “nothing” and Karnaim means “horns,” perhaps because the city bragged of its strength. The Israelites bragged that they were so mighty that they had won their wars against these cities and expanded. But Amos said that meant nothing, because they would soon suffer punishment as a judgment from God.

(Amos 6:14) Indeed, I am raising up against you a nation, O house of Israel, says the LORD, the God of hosts, and they shall oppress you from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi Arabah.

God declared that they might brag about their strength during their years of prosperity and relative peace, but God himself would raise up a nation (the Assyrians) and they would destroy and oppress the Kingdom of Israel from top to bottom (in its entirety).

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What were the names of the capital cities of the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel?
2. What did Amos say would happen to the Kingdom of Israel? What would reign?
3. Who would be the first to go into exile?
4. What would happen to many of the wealthy people who did not go into exile?
5. Explain who or what God swore an oath by and why.

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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